未踏召喚：//ブラッドサイン
10
The unexplored summon://blood-sign X
鎌池和馬
イラスト：依河和希
電撃文庫

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Novel Illustrations

10 未踏召喚：//ブラッドサイン

鎌池和馬 ～イラスト～ 依河和希

城山恭介【しろやま・きょうすけ】
『フリーダム』に属する当代最強の召喚師。
忘れがちだが実は現役の高校生。

今日からは学校でも一緒でございます
あにうえ
あにうえと過ごす幸せな日常――

あの日
あにうえは
わたくしのプレゼントを
受け取ってくれて

世界は
幸せな方向へと
舵を切り
変わっていく――

アアアア

HA

……っ
どうして!?
あにうえはっ
そこまでして
わたくしを苦しめる
のでございますかっ
知れたこと
あなたを苦しめ
少しでも隙を
作れるなら
そんな些細な
積み重ねの果てに
勝利をもぎ取る
事ができるなら
こんな命なんか
惜しまない
そういう話を
している
訳だが？

あに
うえっ……
いやだっ!!
あにうえ……

あにうえェェ
えええええええ
えええええええ
えええええええ!!!

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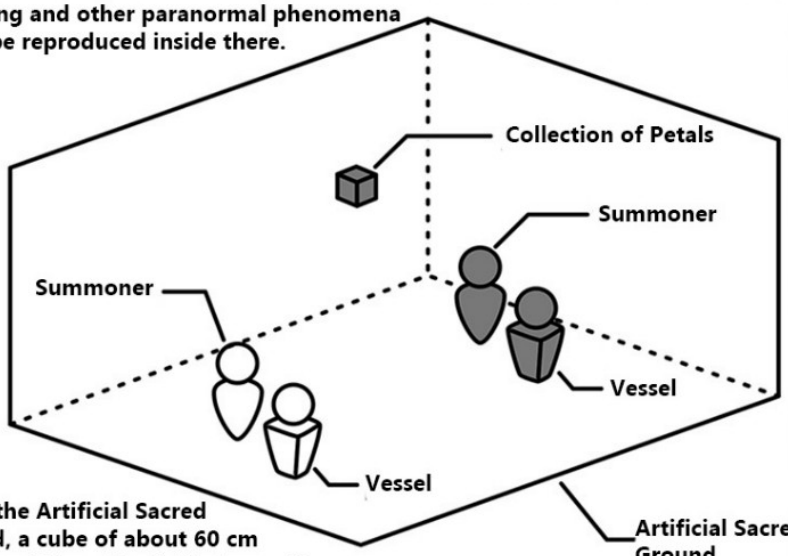
Battle Tutorial

Battle Tutorial of "The unexplored summon://blood-sign"

The Summoning Battle begins when one of the summoners uses an Incense Grenade.

phase 1

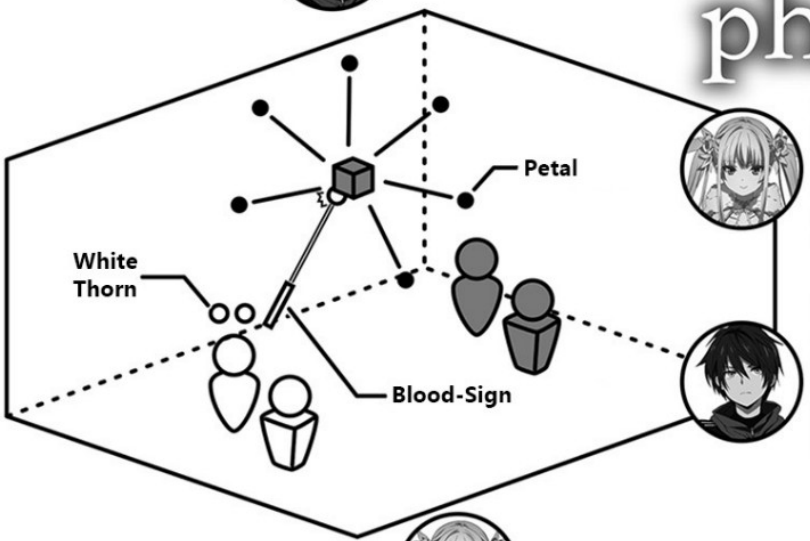
When the Incense Grenade is used, an Artificial Sacred Ground forms around them. Summoning and other paranormal phenomena can only be reproduced inside there.



Inside the Artificial Sacred Ground, a cube of about 60 cm appears at the midpoint between the summoners.

It is a collection of the 216 Petals which are red spheres about the size of an apple.

phase 2



3 white spheres known as White Thorns appear with each summoner. Those are hit with a long staff known as a Blood-Sign and they collide with the Petals.

You hit the Petals with the White Thorns in order to knock them into the spherical Spots that appear in 36 locations inside the Artificial Sacred Ground.

What Petals are hit into the Spots changes what can be summoned.

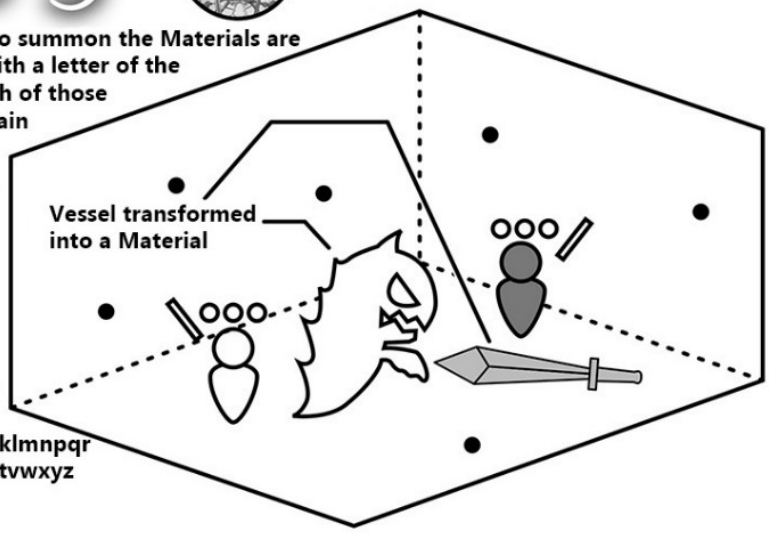
And the vessel's body is used to create...

Battle Tutorial of "The unexplored summon://blood-sign"

phase 3

...a Material. The summoners use them for a fight to the death.

The Petals used to summon the Materials are each engraved with a letter of the alphabet and each of those belongs to a certain Sound Range.



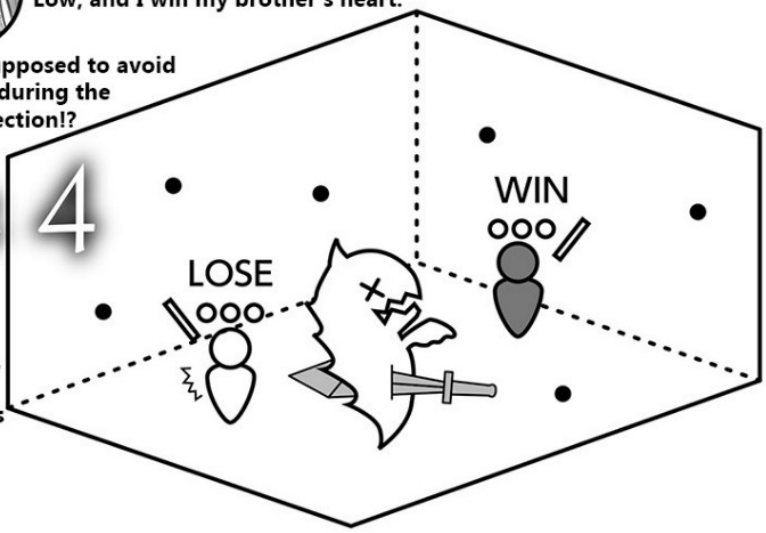
aiueo are vowels and thus the Lowest Sound Range. As for the consonants, bcdfghj are Low, klmnpqr are Middle, and stvwxyz are High.

There are of course rules governing the summoned Materials and they are based on the Petals' rules.

Low wins against High, High wins against Middle, Middle wins against Low, and I win my brother's heart.

Weren't we supposed to avoid making jokes during the explanation section!?

phase 4



And after the vessels transform into Materials, they continued to be updated into new forms as they fight.

The Materials start at Regulation-class. After summoning 100 of those, you gain the right to summon the higher Divine-class. And after summoning 50 of those, you gain the right to summon the even higher Unexplored-class.

The vessel has a core known as their Silhouette. If that is destroyed, the battle ends. The losing summoner and vessel will become dolls that wander around in a stupor.

And that concludes our simple explanation of the Summoning Battle. As a summoner fights more and more battles, they earn more titles known as Awards. And if their number of Awards reaches 1000...hee hee hee. Now, I wonder what happens then.

Phase 1
Upper Cube: Collection of Petals
Left Dark Figure: Summoner
Right Dark Figure: Vessel
Left White Figure: Summoner
Right White Figure: Vessel
Overall Box: Artificial Sacred Ground

K: The Summoning Battle begins when one of the summoners uses an Incense Grenade.
Q: When the Incense Grenade is used, an Artificial Sacred Ground forms around them. Summoning and other paranormal phenomena can only be reproduced inside there.
Q: Inside the Artificial Sacred Ground, a cube of about 60 cm appears at the midpoint between the summoners.
K: It is a collection of the 216 Petals which are red spheres about the size of an apple.

Phase 2
Dark Ball: Petal
White Ball: White Thorn
White Stick: Blood-Sign

Q: 3 white spheres known as White Thorns appear with each summoner. Those are hit with a long staff known as a Blood-Sign and they collide with the Petals.
K: You hit the Petals with the White Thorns in order to knock them into the spherical Spots that appear in 36 locations inside the Artificial Sacred Ground.
Q: What Petals are hit into the Spots changes what can be summoned.
K: And the vessel's body is used to create…

Phase 3
White Monster and Dark Sword: Vessel transformed into a Material

Q: …a Material. The summoners use them for a fight to the death.
K: The Petals used to summon the Materials are each engraved with a letter of the alphabet and each of those belongs to a certain Sound Range.
Q: aiueo are vowels and thus the Lowest Sound Range. As for the consonants, bcdfghj are Low, klmnpqr are Middle, and stvwxyz are High.

K: There are of course rules governing the summoned Materials and they are based on the Petals' rules.
Q: Low wins against High, High wins against Middle, Middle wins against Low, and I win my brother's heart.
K: Weren't we supposed to avoid making jokes during the explanation section!?

Phase 4
K: And after the vessels transform into Materials, they continued to be updated into new forms as they fight.
Q: The Materials start at Regulation-class. After summoning 100 of those, you gain the right to summon the higher Divine-class. And after summoning 50 of those, you gain the right to summon the even higher Unexplored-class.
K: The vessel has a core known as their Silhouette. If that is destroyed, the battle ends. The losing summoner and vessel will become dolls that wander around in a stupor.
Q: And that concludes our simple explanation of the Summoning Battle. As a summoner fights more and more battles, they earn more titles known as Awards. And if their number of Awards reaches 1000…hee hee hee. Now, I wonder what happens then.

Prologue

Ah ha ha. Hee hee hee.
Oh, excuse me. This is the White Queen, the Unexplored-class who fell in love☆
My brother is the one and only person in the whole wide world I love! I do not need anything else. Nothing could make me happier than to have him walking by my side.
There is no point in trying to verbally express how much I love him. Unfortunately, every single linguistic system on this planet is incapable of expressing this feeling.
That is how much I love him.
And love is not meant to be a casual thing.
Human lives are short, things rarely go the way they want, a great many problems will stand in their way, and they may have to compromise. So they begin to wonder if the happiness they achieved was really the best they could have found. So when someone else insults the relationship they have chosen to create with their lover or spouse, it angers them. Because they want their partner all to themselves? No. Because they want to protect their partner? Also no. They are afraid. Afraid that they could have chosen differently and found even greater happiness. They cannot accept that they might have let their rightful happiness slip from their fingers, leaving them stuck in an inferior position forevermore.
Why is infidelity and adultery frowned upon in most every culture?
It is not because they fear their preexisting household will fall apart. Don’t you think they are simply afraid of having to face the reality that they could always change their mind and aim for something even better? Once they see someone else succeed in that, all of the systems built by people stuck in the relationships they “settled” for will fail simultaneously across the globe.
But none of that has any bearing on me.
The flow of time, external factors meant to restrict one’s actions, and the circumstances of the common folk can never stop me from doing what I want. That means I can pursue true love no matter what it takes.
I have only ever fallen in love the one time.
And I am willing to sacrifice the future of the world to fulfill that love.
I am saying I have a truly transcendent and heavenly love.
Where could you find a greater love than this or a greater success and happiness than that provided by this love?

…
…
…
Ggbrhewafa,
broooooooooooooootherrrr

Opening X-01: The Path to Doomsday

“ff277e99da5e800aa” (A serious error has occurred.)
“1090cc6bd8e3e19f8” (A serious error has occurred.)
(OpeNiNg X-01 opeN 08/b3 1b:b0)
thE p_Th TO dOom_dAy

The world was collapsing.
But viewing the cause as a chronological series of events would only lead to confusion. It would be easier to shuffle the events around to better organize the information.
Shiroyama Kyousuke and the White Queen.
They constantly fought, bickered, and worked to kill each other.

For example, Guard of Honor, a group of White Queen worshipers, attempted to infiltrate Toy Dream 35. In this incident with a name taken from those who lead the Queen’s parade, Shiroyama Kyousuke worked with the Meinokawa Sisters, Renge and Higan, in the fierce fight to defeat Azalea Magentarain and the White Queen who lurked behind that girl.

“This has to be what everyone really wanted to do!!”

When it comes to events related to the White Queen, we must not forget the criminal group that attempted to create a world without death. In that fight centered on a ghost known as the Rainy Girl, Kyousuke worked with his classmate known as Librarian while throwing himself into a deadly battle to stop Student Council President Benikomichi Fuuki and Summoner Yasuzumi Hayato of Telomere’s End and their organization.

“That is not what I meant.”

Speaking of criminal organizations, Kyousuke was once hired to protect a facility from those who were targeting the world police of Government. He made a contract with a vessel named Isabelle in the process and she had been altered to give her that talent. They fought against a vessel girl

working to retrieve her friend from that Anthill Project and Summoner Biondetta who had a connection to Kyousuke's past. The confusion only grew due to a glove-shaped gadget known as Girl's Backdoor.
And at the end of this battle, he was given an audience with the Red Lady, one of the Unexplored-classes known as the Three. That Unexplored-class was known for giving accurate prophecies and she gave him the following oracle:

"You can never defeat the White Queen."

At a Summoning Ceremony weapon's show, Pandemonium made an appearance as the key to a conspiracy by the Deltaston Family which had infiltrated all three major powers: Government, Illegal, and Freedom. Kyousuke traveled between two different temporal viewpoints – the past and the present – sometimes bickering with the White Queen and sometimes fighting alongside Himekawa Mika, who looked just like his teacher Shigara Masami, while he challenged Max Layard and Incense Expert Ellie Slide.
Afterwards, he was given an audience with the Wicked Green Woman of the Three.
And a piece of the truth was revealed. The members of the Unexplored-class were the very laws that ruled the territory in which the gods lived, but the White Queen had singlehandedly defeated them all and had essentially chained them to her while she dragged them around. Thus, killing the White Queen was not possible using the current laws and relying on the Blood-Sign Summoning Ceremony.

"I value freedom above all else. In that sense, she is in the way."

But then Kyousuke did not hesitate to rely on the Yellow Gills of the Three. His goal was to use a dream to replay his own past in the underground lab known as the Queen's Miniature Garden and search for hints to defeat the Queen.
After receiving some success in that, he rescued his old acquaintance Biondetta from a prison transport vehicle and agreed to a contract of revenge. He asked for her help in killing the White Queen.
At the same time, Azalea was also rescued from imprisonment by the The Saint and other Queen worshipers.

"No reason. It just so happened to be Tanabata, so I thought coming home would be a good idea."

Toy Dream 35 received multiple visitors during Tanabata.
One was Sekurtiti, the central figure of a group of grave keepers and priestesses with their origin in Egyptian Mythology. Another was Azalea,

the leader of Bridesmaid, a group that worshiped the Queen. The last was the monster with Government Award 1000: Elvast Toydream. They fought an intense battle over the Founder's Gallery left behind by the original Toydream who led that global entertainment company.
The gallery's guardian was Aika Toydream.
The Founder's Gallery was the very apartment building she lived in.

"Onii-chan, do you know the story of the World's Happiest Girl?"

After finding an answer vis-à-vis killing the Queen, Kyousuke and Biondetta visited Houbi Village, home of the Meinokawa Sisters, to execute their idea. Their goal was Aoi, history's first artificial vessel. They needed her help to create a vessel strong enough to withstand the strongest Unexplored-class. They were opposed by the elites of Bridesmaid, Olivia Highland (a vessel Kyousuke had worked with in the past), and Doctor S, his own father.
In the end, he freed Olivia from the Queen's bonds and worked with her to summon the Colorless Little Girl, a new Unexplored-class embedded in the other world *for the sole purpose of killing the White Queen*, and successfully defeated the Queen.
But the White Queen somehow resurrected herself and said the following:

"What if killing me caused some critical damage to the Colorless Little Girl?"

Olivia's homeland of Eastern Europe's Kingdom F was at risk of destruction.
They were opposed by the Stars and Stripes who had the world's strongest military.
And that opposition was inflamed by the Toy Dream Company that was supposed to give dreams to children around the world. Kyousuke and Olivia began fighting to stop the spread of the war-supporting Blue Film and to eliminate the justification for war.
In the process, they were occasionally attacked by the Colorless Little Girl who had gone berserk.
In the end, they managed to stop the Colorless Little Girl in a brief chance for dialogue, but that enraged the vessel supporting that Unexplored-class's existence – in other words, the White Queen. She mercilessly tried to kill Kyousuke.
Then someone appeared to protect him.
It was a summoner who had supposedly died long ago in the Queen's Miniature Garden. Freedom Award 3000, Shigara Masami, appeared before them as a Divine-class.

"Queen, you are weak."

And for some reason, Shigara Masami took the White Queen's side.
Kyousuke, Biondetta, the White Queen, and Shigara Masami took their separate paths to pursue Shiroyama Kyousuke's roots.
They found a small house in a rural city.
Doctor S, his wife, Kyousuke, and his little sister had lived there.
At the end of a cruel experiment, Kyousuke and his sister had been forced to fight to the death. The White Queen had not known restraint and she attacked his little sister in order to protect him.
The entire distortion was concentrated on that one act.
The White Queen represents a dangerous love and Shiroyama Kyousuke desired a family's love. Their paths could never cross and they had chosen a path of unavoidable conflict while constantly aware of each other's presence.

"When I'm reborn, then I'll take your side, Nii-sama."

And that cleared the path to doomsday.
On one side was a certain boy and the Colorless Little Girl, the Unexplored-class containing the soul of his dead sister.
On the other was the White Queen who had surpassed her limits to outdo her existing position as the strongest.
"I'll kill you!!!!!!"
"I'll kill you!!!!!!"
Now.
The time had come to settle everything.

Facts

- A critical error has been detected. Diagnosing system…
- Responding to emergency situation by rebooting in safe mode.
- Shiroyama Kyousuke and the White Queen’s relationship is beyond repair.
- They have clashed in the outdoor plaza of the rural city shopping center named Multiple.
- Shiroyama Kyousuke has Meinokawa Aoi and Biondetta and the White Queen has Shigara Masami.
- The Colorless Little Girl is aware of this battle.
- A dangerous love and a family’s love. The two of them have begun to clash over those incompatible feelings.

Opening X-02: A Dance on the Precipice of Death

“Why!? Why must you make me suffer so, brother!?”
“Isn’t it obvious?”
(Opening X-02 Open 08/23 12:20)
A Dance on the Precipice of Death

It was hell.
Anywhere would be when those two seriously said they were going to kill each other. With no regard for who might be caught in the crossfire. No hell could have been worse, not even the Tapana spoken of in Buddhism or the Cocytus referenced in the Divine Comedy.
The rural city’s Multiple shopping center had a large open space similar to a courtyard. It was normally used for summer break hero shows and other children’s events, so it would be a memorable place for the children.
But now someone did not hesitate to throw an Incense Grenade there.
It was of course Shiroyama Kyousuke.
Meanwhile, the White Queen could distort the world with her mere presence.
“Brother…”
No.
It would not matter even if the hoodie boy set up an Artificial Sacred Ground here, acquired his three White Thorns, and swung his Blood-Sign around to summon a Material. He would have to start at the bottom-level Regulation-class and work his way up to the powerful gods and demons and the Queen was not going to wait for him to do that…but that *was not* why it would not matter. Whether he summoned a Regulation-class, a Divine-class, or an Unexplored-class and no matter what orders he gave them, the enraged White Queen only had to make a scratching motion with her fingers to tear through that insolent being and the very space in which it existed. Not even the Three at the top of the Unexplored-class could escape that fate.
Incurring the White Queen’s wrath meant death.
She was not known as a lady or a princess; she was a queen. And it was time she demonstrated why.

“Brotherrrr

She tilted her head, turned deeply mechanical eyes toward the summoner, and spoke.
<Nii-sama.>
“RQ Cat. …This is fine.”
<Nii-sama!>
The situation was perfect for Kyousuke and the Colorless Little Girl.
The vessel’s role was over once that being had been summoned to this world.
However.
<How?>
It was not the White Queen who spoke without thinking.
Other summoners insolently shared the same battlefield as Kyousuke and the Queen.
One of those was Freedom Award 3000, World Complete. Shigara Masami was a ponytailed researcher wearing a tight skirt suit and a lab coat.
<You’re supposed to go through 100 Regulation-classes and 50 Divine-classes before reaching the Unexplored-class, so how!?>
“Whoops. From here on out, we must ask that all guests obey the proper etiquette and dress code while enjoying their meal. If you rudely try to cut in line, we must ask that you leave☆”
And the other was Biondetta, the waitress demon, who cut in with a smile.
<Detta-chan, what are you doing!?>
“You look at me like I am some poor, miserable thing.”
They both had one of the translucent slimes of the Original Series.
Regulation-class. Cost: 1. The lowest of the low. They were hopelessly ordinary and incomparable to the White Queen or Colorless Little Girl. But a skilled summoner could build their Material up from there using countless transformations.
“But I’m personally fine with the status quo. I’m not trying to change anything. All I want to do is irresponsibly lend a helping hand in other people’s revenge!! …That’s all it is, really. So will you please not rob this mentally and physically ruined girl of the purpose she has found in her life?”
<Are you sure you’re doing this to help with his revenge? Are you sure you aren’t trying to help Kyousuke-kun as an older sister like you did back in the Queen’s Miniature Garden?>
“…”
<I am Freedom Award 3000, you know? I am part of the Divine-class. Do you really think you are a match for me in this field when you still belong to this world, Detta-chan?>

“In a proper fight, probably not. I mean, I’m only Freedom Award 920, so I couldn’t hope to stand up to you in your area of expertise.”
However.
The girl known as Biondetta stuck out her tongue and licked her lips in such a seductive way that the woman who had helped raise her could barely stand to watch.
“Have you forgotten? I am Liar Cat. I am the smiling Cheshire Cat who will take my customer’s revenge much further than they ever intended. I carry the Queen’s hatred. Did you think you could measure my skills using the traditional methods? You could even say I have inherited a fraction of the Queen’s distorting charisma. If I use my power to replace stability with chaos and mayhem, it will not be hard to swallow up a hardheaded rule-follower.”
The arrow-shaped tail extending from her miniskirt swished behind her and her arms further squished together the chest already accentuated by her suspenders.
She must have been sweaty because this produced an audible sound from her cleavage. Biondetta’s voice already contained a toxic level of heat and sweetness, but there was also something odd mixed in.
Shigara Masami grimaced, but Biondetta’s eyes shined bright.
It was an eerie light, like the sticky glow on the dark ocean surface as the waves rose and fell in the night or like bugs smaller than grains of rice crawling along your eyeballs.
Perhaps this was their fight too.
Shiroyama Kyousuke had not been raised by just one person.
His original home had been a nightmarish crucible of a laboratory and his later home of the Queen’s Miniature Garden had been destroyed, but he had still met people there. And the hands they reached out to Shiroyama Kyousuke must have triggered some kind of response in his immature heart.
One had embraced that change.
The other had regretted that change even after failing to die.
“I will not let anyone say that what happened in that miniature garden was meaningless. Not you who led that facility deep, deep underground and not Kyousuke-chan himself.”
<No, Detta-chan, we need to stop here. We were wrong to even try to control the Queen from the outside. If we had accepted she was a person all her own, none of that would ever have happened!!>
So.
The older sister and the teacher readied their Blood-Signs here.
To create a future for Shiroyama Kyousuke in their own way.
“Ohhhh!!!!!!”
<Ohhhh!!!!!!>

Meanwhile, the White Queen clicked her tongue while holding her wrist with her other hand.
Yes, the Queen did.
Of course.
The White Queen knew these were exceptional circumstances. You would normally have had to follow the steps Shigara Masami had mentioned, but if you hit all the Petals into the Spots in order, you could skip past all that setup and summon any Material right off the bat.
But this had been the very first hit.
That initial strike would shatter the three-dimensional Rose and almost randomly send the Petals every which way, so it would normally be unthinkable to spell out the name you wanted there. It was as ridiculous as the ultimate form of cheating in mahjong or hanafuda, where you set up everything on the table to give yourself the hand you wanted right away.
Even the White Queen only knew of one person who could do this.
Namely…
“Elvast Toydream. Have you reached the level of Government Award 1000?”
No.
That monstrous summoner had always summoned the White Queen with his first move thanks to his spatial awareness skills. He used a unique sense to instantly scan the terrain and walls of the Artificial Sacred Ground to subconsciously calculate out what hit on the Rose would give him what he wanted.
But Kyousuke was different.
He really had simply hit the White Thorn with his Blood-Sign. He had simply sent the Petals scattering every which way to signal the start of the battle.
And yet he had arrived at this result.
Specifically, the terrain, the Artificial Sacred Ground, the arrangement of the Spots, and even the flow of the White Thorns and Petals had been forcibly altered as if sucked in by a magnet.
All so that the Colorless Little Girl would be summoned no matter what Shiroyama Kyousuke did.
In other words…
“…!? This was not brother’s doing. Did you distort the coordinates yourself, Colorless Little Girl!?”
This was cheating of the highest order.
Once her reaction began, her energy grew so rapidly there was no controlling it.
Meanwhile.
The Unexplored-class that contained a dead girl’s soul softly placed her arms around Kyousuke’s hips. The summoner was guarded by the protective circle that kept out all causes of death, but even that fundamental fact was fooled by the strange form of cheating going on here.
<I will protect you, Nii-sama.>
That had been this young girl’s goal from the very beginning.

She may have been more consistent even than Kyousuke and the White Queen at the center of it all.
<When I'm reborn, then I'll take your side, Nii-sama.>
"!?"
However.
The White Queen could tell something here.
That was a ghost. That ghost of the past haunted Shiroyama Kyousuke. He might see it as an opportunity, but if not for that girl, he never would have thought to fight the White Queen. He was only doing this because he had a concrete method at hand. So the Colorless Little Girl really was a ghost whose regret and obsession dragged the living into the realm of the dead.
"Curse you…"
She was furious.
The Sword of Truth, which surrounded her as her battle outfit, picked up on that fury and throbbed. A great number of weapons shot out in every direction like wings, like a skirt, like countless hands, and like indescribable things.
"You pretend to take his side, you don't even show the courage to oppose him…and you dare use that to steal my brother from me!?"
She gave a shout, but she was stopped by a high-pitched sound.
Once the dark-eyed Little Girl held out a small and soft hand, twice as many weapons shot out. Orange sparks flew, but it was the White Queen's weapons which were pushed back.
<I will protect you, Nii-sama.>
Something new happened behind that stubborn boy.
It was not over once the Colorless Little Girl had been summoned. While the Third Summoning Ceremony had the summoner switch between so many different Materials, the Fourth Summoning Ceremony left it all in the Colorless Little Girl's hands, meaning the method and element of her attacks was changed using the Petals.
But Shiroyama Kyousuke did not do anything so ordinary.
He removed one hand from his Blood-Sign and reached casually into his pocket. Surely he was not going to throw a new Incense Grenade now.
Instead, he pulled out a knife far too small for combat. It was a maintenance tool used to carve down the holy wood cork used on the end of the Blood-Sign.
"?"
Even the White Queen had to frown at this.
She should have realized what he was doing.
Her predictions were close to being oracles or prophecies. When she opened her mouth, she could start a new religion or end a mythology. So just how much of a crisis was the world in if something *she had not even considered* was happening?
This is what happened:
Without pausing, Shiroyama Kyousuke slit one side of his neck.

“Ah.”
The short knife was only as long as his thumb, but the blade sank in to the base.
There was no blood.
The boy she loved more than anyone did not even flinch.
“Ahh.”
The protective circle would negate any damage that would be fatal to the summoner, but that effect was limited to the 10 minutes of the Artificial Sacred Ground.
Causes of death already within the circle were not deflected and malignant tumors were not torn from the body. So if a tool small enough for the protective circle to not recognize as a threat were used to commit suicide, that would not be deflected to prevent the summoner’s death.
So it would instead forcibly adjust things to prevent the summoner’s death no matter how much they were slashed or stabbed.
Simply put, Kyousuke would die once the battle ended. Even if the White Queen won or if the battle was ended peaceably, she could not have Shiroyama Kyousuke.
No matter what.
“Ahhhh

And he spoke in a voice that may have been more frightening than the precision-guided missile he so loathed.
He tossed aside the small knife used to take his own life and held his Blood-Sign in both hands once more.
His words were far colder than the White Queen's.
"If your suffering will create even the slightest opening for attack and repeating that process enough times will allow me to ultimately achieve victory, then my life is a small price to pay. Isn't that what we were talking about?"
The White Queen's face crumpled up.
And with an even louder scream, a bright white explosion enveloped everything as a dome.

Facts

- The White Queen could not bring herself to give up on her love.
- The Colorless Little Girl can distort the world’s coordinates to set things up so she will be summoned by any shot made by the summoner. That essentially breaks the Blood-Sign rules and the connection between summoner and Material. So instead of the summoner summoning the Material and using them to fight, the Material has the summoner summon them and drags the summoner to almost certain death.
- The White Queen views the Colorless Little Girl as a ghost who lures the living into the realm of the dead by giving them hope as a means of fighting.
- Shiroyama Kyousuke cut his own carotid artery inside the protective circle to create an opening in the White Queen. Win or lose the battle, he will now lose his life due to blood loss once the battle ends.

Stage 01: Across the Seven Planets and Twelve Constellations

“They are hacking the Summoning Ceremony.”
“Are you serious?”
(Stage 01 Open !!timestamp ERROR!!)
Across the Seven Planets and Twelve Constellations

Part 1

In truth, the 10-minute time limit did not function as a real limit.
The White Queen and the Colorless Little Girl.
The world had not been designed for a situation as extreme as a direct confrontation between those two great beings, so it was hardly surprising when their clash caused the theory of relativity to fail and the laws of time and space to break down.
Everything was warped.
It happened when the Colorless Little Girl's palm touched the very edge of the domed explosion born of the White Queen's wrath. That attack was sent equally in every direction, so it should have been unavoidable, yet it was twisted like a vortex and it *was diverted* as if being swept up into the blue sky overhead.
In the end, there were no fatalities.
They could only thank their lucky stars that the extent of the damage was some shredded cumulonimbus clouds and scattering electricity.
But the Colorless Little Girl puffed out her soft cheeks with her eyes still devoid of emotion.
Almost like she had caught someone folding up her favorite dress and using it as a rag to wipe up the floor. She seemed to be saying that was the wrong way to use that tool.
<That was meaningless.>
"But it was necessary," spat back Kyousuke.
This was not simple benevolence. In fact, his heart was filled with a deep and dark hostility. If anything, his emotion was closest to spite.
"It is absolutely necessary to lay on the pressure so she loses her cool."
"Oh…"
Something seemed to catch in the White Queen's throat.
Was there more? Was it not over yet?
She seemed to be lamenting the length of the hellish path laid out before her.
"Ohhhhhhhh!! Agghgaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaahhh!!"
She shouted.
She shouted and raised her right arm horizontally.
"Obey (v)."
She did more than just clench her teeth.

Her lovely lips finally uttered words. And she directly spoke the language that possessed enough power to draw the gods up from another world just by linking the letters together properly.
“Obey my command (jh – a – ra – ou – v). That sword will instantly cut down that unneeded thief (ii – wuh – i – iu – qb – o – kr – fp – ei – tz)!!”
Her clothing wriggled.
Instead of picking up on its master’s will and automatically providing her with the power to fight, she manually controlled it.
The cloth wrapped around her horizontally raised arm, hardened, and produced a sword more beautifully sinister than any art could hope to emulate.
The White Queen showed no mercy.
Her target was the Colorless Little Girl’s skinny neck.
She briefly exhaled and then swung the blade to the side without so much as a glance at her surroundings!!
Just then, the scenery grew distorted.
After all, this was a full-power attack from the White Queen. The distance from her target did not matter; this attack could cleanly behead the Colorless Little Girl and slice through the surrounding scenery in the process. It did not matter how many people were outside the Artificial Sacred Ground. No matter how many lives would be lost, the Sword of Truth that gently surrounded her as a battle costume would spread destruction as she saw fit.
However.
That was not what had caused the distortion in the scenery.
Her full-power swing of the sword sliced through the empty desert night and launched a tremendous wall of sand into the air beyond the horizon.
“Wha-!?”
The Queen of all people stared in confusion with her sword still in its follow-through position.
The wall of sand covered her vision like a sandstorm and nearly blotted out the moon in the night sky, so she clicked her tongue and sliced through it all with a second sword strike. And what did she see then? The moonlight shined on a frigid desert where countless stone blocks had been stacked to form square pyramids and giant monuments stood to praise ancient rulers.
“E…gypt?”
It was hard to believe, but what else could she call it?
She was the White Queen and she was not known as the strongest for her physical strength alone. She had senses beyond those of humans and those senses told her the truth. She did not know how it had happened, but her coordinates had unexpectedly *jumped*.
That had prevented any of the panicked civilians in the Multiple shopping center from being cut down and she had only sliced through the empty sand.
But.

But how had that salvation come about!?
<Nii-sama.>
“Ignore it. It’s best if she’s confused.”
She clenched her teeth even harder.
And the White Queen voiced her raw emotions.
“Give it a rest, you pedophile (ri – ou – v – ii – ee – biq – u)!!”
She slashed her blade back from its follow-through position.
But once Shiroyama Kyousuke spun his Blood-Sign around, the scenery had already blurred.
They were in the South American Amazon. A stifling heat and humidity surrounded thick jungle trees which were meaninglessly felled with loud cracking sounds. Although the illegal logging and largescale slash-and-burn agriculture here was visible from space, so destruction may not have been anything new here.
Their coordinates had shifted.
Kyousuke’s side did not bother explaining what kind of supernatural power had been used or what surface world phenomenon it had caused.
The myths remaining in this world were highly optimized to be easily told and understood by humans. They had needed to spread among the illiterate and uneducated masses, not just the scholars chosen from the upper classes.
Those in the realm of the gods may have stooped down to the level of the human realm in that way. Even if only to drive the fear of divine punishment into those people so they would not sin again.
But the Unexplored-class was different.
Human concerns did not matter to them.
If they were not understood, they would simply push the humans away.
So if your understanding could not keep up with the situation playing out before you, you would be exposed to a unilateral attack. Expository speeches and bragging explanations were not a necessary part of supernatural fights to the death. If you did not understand, you would be driven to the verge of death without ever understanding.
They had changed continents twice in the span of ten seconds.
No, time and space were linked by the theory of relativity, so if they had this much control over space, it was possible time had been distorted as well.
Were they traveling through space or through time? Even that became suspect in this battle.
And make no mistake.
The surrounding scenery was not what truly mattered; Shiroyama Kyousuke and the White Queen were. And the source of the power obeying – or possessing – the boy was the Colorless Little Girl.
You only had to remember.
Government Award 1000, Elvast Toydream, had reached an instant understanding of the Artificial Sacred Ground’s walls and of every slight contour within the surrounding terrain so he could perfectly calculate out

the movement of the letter-containing Petals after the first hit and thus summon the White Queen with his first move no matter the situation.
But that was a passive technique that used the terrain that was already there.
…Then what if you had the ability to freely manipulate the surrounding terrain?
“So this is how it worked.”
The White Queen gnashed her teeth.
But not because she had figured out her enemy’s tactics. Because it had taken her this long to figure it out.
Because she was supposed to have a perfect grasp of both this world and the other.
“This is the true form of your power! I didn’t notice it at the shopping center, but you moved us some small amount. I thought it was strange that you managed to summon the Colorless Little Girl on the first move, but it was so simple. You just had to make a random shot and, if that shot wasn’t quite right, she simply shifted the entire table for you. Like she was tugging on the tablecloth!! If you can cheat like this, there are no more restrictions in the Blood-Sign system. This goes beyond auto-aim. With this, you can move the fat turkey in front of your gun so you only have to pull the trigger. You’ve created a shooting game on the most hand-holding of all easy modes!!”
And.
If Shiroyama Kyousuke had already summoned his trump card, why had he been so focused on the White Thorns and Petals and even begun altering the world’s coordinates?
A powerful pillar had been inserted into the laws of both worlds.
(The Third Summoning Ceremony switched between countless Materials to represent all things.)
The White Queen was surprised, but her thoughts were also grinding away.
The peak of the world was not so low that being caught off guard would be enough to reduce her performance.
(Meanwhile, the Fourth does the same by switching between the Colorless Little Girl’s weapons and changing her attributes and method of attack. So even if she is an irregular Queen killer, the battle is not over from the moment she is summoned. Brother must support her based on the situation and choose the best attack and defense against my ever-changing onslaught!!)
So…
“RQ Cat, High #11 (s – ag – ag). Standby.”
<Understood, Nii-sama.>
“Tease her to lure her in closer. Then block with Middle #418 (k – fh – ag – et), bring down her defenses with Middle #633 (k – st – td – td), circle behind her, and attack with Low #777 (b – sv – sv – sv).”
<Nii-sama, I will leave everything to you.>

With a series of pleasant sounds, more and more red Petals were knocked into the Spots hanging in the air.
The Queen had not seen this side of Kyousuke.
He was not spelling out the names of Materials. In fact, he was more focused on the number than the letters.
The actual phenomena caught up.

The scenery blurred. The ground below the White Queen’s feet moved like a conveyer belt and she was roughly pulled toward the Colorless Little Girl. She had already heard them explain their plan, yet she could not reach them. She immediately swung down her pure white sword, but then she clicked her tongue in regret. The Colorless Little Girl pulled a thick axe from her weapon skirt and struck the base of the sword. The blow should have been deflected backwards, but she instead made a perfect parry and twirled like a figure skater. Then she moved to the White Queen’s side. She kept her rotation going, her entire weapon skirt opened up, and all those weapons targeted the twintailed girl’s hips like a giant circular saw.
“Gah!?”
The White Queen immediately unraveled her sword to send a white beam of light between them and avoid having her flesh and blood torn into, but the close-range blast caused her to lean back a bit herself. She staggered back a few steps as well.
Bring down her defenses and attack.
As soon as Kyousuke’s words replayed in the White Queen’s mind, the Colorless Little Girl had the giant books behind her devour two bookmarks she held.
The two attacks intersected.
One was an intense acid rain that dissolved the entire world after the planet was covered by the black clouds of pollution.
The other was an extraterrestrial threat that started as a single small egg attached to a giant meteor and overran everything with its unstoppable reproductive power.
The two possible ends of the world erupted from the old tomes and attempted to slice through the White Queen’s torso like a giant pair of scissors.
“Like that would work!!”
The White Queen did not bother with any cheap tricks.
No weapon could reach her. Her greatest weapon was her own slender arms. She grabbed the large pair of scissors coming for her hips, forcibly bent them even as her gloves decomposed, and sent them back toward the Colorless Little Girl.
The Little Girl was indeed a Queen killer, but Kyousuke was managing her power.
She had only managed to execute the Queen by switching between attacks as the situation demanded, so her soft skin could not deflect any attack of any type.
Meaning…
“Ghghhh!! Your own attacks might just be able to harm you!!”
<Nii-sama.>
With a buzzing sound like power entering an old cathode ray tube, the scenery blurred again. They were in an Antarctic blizzard with an aurora in the sky. The coordinate change was no longer a surprise, but it still caused

her to miss her mark. The Colorless Little Girl was not standing where she should have been, so the deluge of alien lifeforms instead devoured an entire frozen mountain behind her.
The Colorless Little Girl alone had a vulnerability to take advantage of.
But as long as she had Shiroyama Kyousuke wielding his Blood-Sign to give her accurate instructions, she could make up for that.
They were in perfect harmony. They were siblings.
The older brother looked after his vulnerable sister and the little sister relaxed and let her brother take charge.
The symbolism before her eyes caused the White Queen to softly clench her teeth.
She would not claim that should be her spot. Quite the opposite in fact. He still could not bring himself to leave his little sister's side and the more he spoiled her, the worse it got. As the dangerous love being blocked by that familial love, no sight could have been more unpleasant.
So…
"Forget targeting by sight."
Snow white fingers extended from the gloves as they crumbled away.
The White Queen lightly shook her hands and brand new gloves covered her fingertips once more.
"So I will add in a non-physical curse that automatically attacks you. Move spatially away and the curse will continue to pursue you and take your life. Move temporally away and the curse will give chase to the end of time to destroy you. Your cheap tricks will save you no longer. …You ghost, you black cat reeking of death. I will kill you now (wv – i – nc – hc)."
That was a divine oracle.
And if this sort of oracle was disobeyed, she would burn down an entire world in retaliation. In the age when the Third Summoning Ceremony still ruled the world, this might have been enough for a grand altar to be erected in the central square where gloomy festivals were held.
But no more.
Now that they had arrived at the Fourth Summoning Ceremony, Kyousuke and the ghost were not cowed. This was the same as the ancient Central American calendar that had failed to catch on even in 2012. Once it had passed without incident, nothing felt emptier than a prophesied end of the world.
Shiroyama Kyousuke's answer was simple.
"An unavoidable curse, you say?"
"Yes. Doesn't that sound like the perfect weapon to use against those who grow lost in this world and must rely on the other world?"
"Then I just need to rely on a location that can interfere with curses. I need a power source that functions similar to a neodymium magnet for magnetic media or a high-voltage line for cellphone calls. RQ Cat, standby."
It happened a moment later.
It was unclear who was controlling who here.

The name Alice (with) Rabbit was only an empty husk now, but the boy’s Blood-Sign gave a roar and the world was enveloped by a staticky buzz similar to a cathode ray tube.

Part 2

The Artificial Sacred Ground's protective circle rejected any lethal factors that would prevent the summoner from fighting.
Simply put, any physical attacks using a knife or bullet would be deflected and the summoner would have no trouble surviving in a fire, underwater, in a vacuum, or surrounded by poison gas. And this was not limited to external factors. For example, if a summoner threw an Incense Grenade while infected with a deadly virus, they would be temporarily freed from that hellish suffering until the battle's end. Even if their natural lifespan ended in the middle of a battle, they would be able to continue moving until the protective circle was removed.
So.
He could ignore any ordinarily deadly factors. He was free to choose any coordinates he wanted.
And if he wanted to escape the massive curse brought by the White Queen, there was only one option.
The sun.
Shiroyama Kyousuke and the White Queen did not bat an eye as they stood on that blazing land of ultra gravity.
The light would have normally destroyed his eyes, but that was adjusted for him.
He found himself in an orange world.
The gravity was 28 times that of earth. The scorching surface temperature of nearly 6000 degrees Celsius would burn through anything at a touch. A massive prominence passed through the dark and empty night sky above like a rainbow of molten metal.
They only had 10 minutes, but during that 600 seconds, they could move *anywhere* they wanted.
They could throw out their grounded assumptions. There was no need to stick to the framework of earth.
"I see."
There was an odd sound like a saw blade bending.
The White Queen did not even rely on a protective circle as she moved her slender legs to directly set foot on the sun's surface and observed her surroundings curiously.
"During a less-developed era of human civilization, before they knew the difference between stars, planets, and moons, they believed all light from

the heavens was influenced by the seven worlds surrounding the earth. Did you interfere with my non-physical curse by approaching one of the seven planets that laid the foundation of astrology? Much like approaching a transformer substation, broadcast tower, or other powerful EM source to escape a GPS-guided bomb meant to fall on your head.”
However.
There was a quiet sound. No one seemed to care whether or not there was any air here for that sound to propagate through.
It came from the Colorless Little Girl.
A slight gash had appeared in the part of her hair shaped like a cat ear.
“Did you really think a small rotating system like the solar system would be enough to stop my power? Need I remind you I completely control not just this universe but another world as well? There may have been a slight margin of error, but recalculating the parameters takes no time at all. The next attack will have been corrected, so there is no escaping it.”
“What makes you think I’m only relying on the sun?”
“Now we’re talking☆”
The White Queen grinned, rolled up her right sleeve, and gathered strength in that arm. Immediately, the sun’s prominence arching above them was unnaturally caught in place. It succumbed to the Queen and offered its power to her. It would no longer function as a jammer, so Kyousuke hit another White Thorn with his Blood-Sign to accurately strike the Petals.
Buzz!!
Space grew distorted and they found themselves on a crater-pocked natural satellite near a blue planet.
It was known as the moon and it too had been counted as a planet in antiquity.
The White Queen swung her slender arm regardless.
“At this close range, that attack from the sun can reach you directly.”
The world was filled with blazing white and the contrasting black created from the shadows.
The scorching attack launched directly from the sun approached to tear into the lunar surface like an Eastern dragon.
Buzz!!
There was that sound again.
Before the lunar land could melt and cool down as glass, Kyousuke and the Colorless Little Girl moved on to the next planet. After a quick stop on Mars’s red sand, they moved not to Jupiter but its moon Io. It was cold enough for nitrogen to exist as a liquid rather than a gas, but Kyousuke and the Queen were unfazed.
The curse bent.
Even an entire planet could only be used once for jamming. They were fairly ineffectual as ECMs. Once the White Queen learned and adjusted for the error as if using an ECCM, the unseen curse would consume them.
<Nii-sama.>

“This isn’t a problem. Leave it to me.”
Buzz!!
“Oh? We’re past the seven planets now.”
The white ice-covered land they found themselves on had once been known as a planet.
This was Pluto.
A human standing there with skin exposed was a bizarre enough visual on its own, but Kyousuke did not bat an eye.
The White Queen’s natural wickedness began to show on her face. Or perhaps she needed to indulge in those pleasure signals to avoid crying. Either way, she laughed and brought her hands together in front of her surprisingly large chest.
“And this is the end for you☆ Even if we include the new discoveries so innocently made by the later astronomers despite how they made the world’s occultists cry, you can only reach a ten-planet system at most. There are no more *planets in the solar system that are used in astrology*. You can make a U-turn and head back home if you like, but I have already learned how to correct for all the planets along the way. That means you can no longer affect my curse.”
But how much pressure was there between those two soft palms?
She silently squeezed the empty air with enough force to crush a planet as she spoke and smiled.
“So how about we end this now? That took so long it was frankly boring (uu – i – lw – rx – mpe – br).”
“Maybe so.”
Kyousuke spun his Blood-Sign around.
That action was meaningless.
But he was not aiming for a psychological effect like a cat licking itself to relieve tension. That meant Shiroyama Kyousuke was still confident.
“Then I’ll rely on something even further out. Who said I had to stick to the solar system?”
“Seven planets or ten planets, Pluto is the most distant one to have any effect on the occult. I seriously doubt there are any *balls of dirt* past this you can use.”
“Let’s get back to the basics. Back to the age before the Blood-Sign system.”
There was still no change to his expression.
With this boy, it may have been better had there been anger on his face.
The Colorless Little Girl did not seem to know what to do, so he placed a hand on her head to keep his “little sister” by his side while she ticklishly pressed against him. And he spoke coldly.
“Astrology measures people’s destiny based on which of the twelve zodiacs the seven planets pass through as they rotate around the earth. *No matter what actual astronomy says, that is what they believed.*”
“…”

She gnashed her teeth in a way wholly unbefitting of her lovely form.
It was nothing more than a silly sign of affection between brother and sister.
But did Kyousuke realize how scorching a fire it set in the White Queen's chest? He probably did. This time anyway. He may have been a precision-guided missile who had rid himself of all else, but he was the kind of person who would immediately slice through his own carotid artery simply to settle a conflict between a dangerous love and a familial love.
"Fire, water, wind, and earth. The seven planets and the twelve zodiacs each have their own elemental color, so a combination with the same element will increase their power and other combinations will negate each other's power. The circular horoscope is split in two to represent people's inner side and outer side, the angle between the center of the circle and the different planets has meaning, and that can also introduce a multiplier to the calculation. …Except that's all bunk. Fortunetelling looks complicated, but that's only because making it look that way is a good way to stay in business. In truth, it's no more than adding and subtracting a few different symbols."
"What good is that now?"
The girl frowned in confusion while something other than earth's gravity caused her silver twintails to trail behind her.
However…
"Wait, you can't mean…"
"Don't you think the twelve ecliptic constellations will have a similar jamming effect to the seven planets?"
He made it sound so simple, yet he was referring to a journey of literally astronomical distances that would take decades even at the speed of light.
"So let's do this in order. First up is Aries of April births. The corresponding constellation includes a giant star of spectral-class K2 that's only 65 light years away."
And.
The low buzz sounded once more.

Part 3

A series of solid sounds rang out.
Even though they were in the vacuum of space with no matter to propagate sound.
And it was not just Shiroyama Kyousuke and the White Queen who were fighting.
Biondetta had an Unexplored-class. Cost: 18. Sound Range: Middle.
The Wicked “Green” Woman who Fills the World with Empty Treasure (lu – o – np – e – qo – ei – r – k – a – rum – pl).
Shigara Masami also had an Unexplored-class. Cost: 16. Sound Range: High.
The Spirit of Fluttering “Yellow” Gills that Rules the Heavens (s – a – so – voz – tix – ei – yw – za).
Both were from the Three, who were especially glorious even for the Unexplored-class. They were the very laws of the world of the gods and they had originally been powerful enough to restrain the White Queen without needing the Colorless Little Girl.
Biondetta and Shigara Masami had also been inside the Artificial Sacred Ground, so Shiroyama Kyousuke and the White Queen had dragged them along into outer space.
But once outside the solar system, everything looked the same.
That meant they only had to consider the walls of the Artificial Sacred Ground set up in that empty and weightless space. The calculations were much simpler than in a forest or a city full of buildings.
However.
Could they really build up their Materials so easily even then?
“Wah! Wah, wah, wah!!”
<Detta-chan!!>
Shigara Masami was supposedly her enemy, but she still gave a word of caution. Like someone desperately reaching out toward a child about to be swept away in the current.
Yes.
You must not forget. The White Queen and the Colorless Little Girl were exceptions, but Materials from all classes normally belonged to one of three Sound Ranges. Looking at Cost alone, Biondetta seemed to have the advantage with the Wicked Green Woman, but Shigara Masami had the upper hand in the rock-paper-scissors arrangement of Sound Ranges.

Also, Biondetta's forte was trickery.
In addition to the usual fight over White Thorns and Petals, she had intended to use her phone's camera flash and the sniper unit hidden in the tip of her silver Blood-Sign to mess with Shigara Masami's timing.
And yet…
"Tch!!"
<It's no use, Detta-chan. Your cheap tricks can't shake me.>
In that moment, Shigara Masami's eyes were colder than the camera lenses of precision machinery.
<You can never defeat me unless you outdo me with your Blood-Sign and White Thorns.>
"…!?"
This was a pure battle.
Tricks and sleight of hand were not an option in this plain outer space field, so the difference in base ability was reflected in the result.
In fact, Shigara Masami seemed troubled by how easily she was overpowering her opponent.
<Pay careful attention to where Kyousuke-kun and the others are! If you are left behind when they make a jump, you will be stranded in space 65 light years away!!>
"Yes, this really throws me off my game. I mean, are we even limited by ten minutes anymore? I really don't think that's enough time to reach the Three at the top of the Unexplored-class without using any Chains!!"
<Oh, I'm sure the 10 minutes are still in effect.>
Shigara Masami responded more as a researcher than a summoner.
Eve if she did not like it, she was willing to accept anything and continue forward at times like this.
<But when you get close enough to the speed of light, that 10 minutes will have a very different length from ten minutes measured on a clock back on earth. Plus, Kyousuke-kun has obtained an ability to instantly travel a distance that would take 65 years at the speed of light. No one can predict what happens to a human when they travel faster than light!!>
"You're kidding, right? We're actually traveling those distances? Are you sure he isn't opening a convenient wormhole to take us directly from Point A to Point B!?"
<Have you actually observed the instant of movement? I haven't. We can make any number of theories about what's happening here. *They are hacking the Summoning Ceremony.* They had already overcome the need to build up your Material and the use of the White Thorns and Petals, but now they have even overcome the time limit!!>
"Are you serious?"
<Detta-chan, you may not have thought much about choosing to help him *based on your personal beliefs*, but this battle is past the point that it can be controlled by human hands!!>
The Colorless Little Girl had gone berserk.

Or perhaps a chain reaction had begun within her after she reacted to a certain form of energy and she could no longer contain it.
You could call it a spiritual big bang.
It was stable as far as explosions went, but it used a completely different vector from the White Queen who had brought obvious blessings to the world.
They probably had not lied about anything.
They probably had not broken any of the rules.
So Kyousuke and the Colorless Little Girl may have taken issue with someone saying they had gone berserk.
But what if the length of a meter extended to the end of the universe or the length of a minute continued to the fall of civilization? The rules described using earth's metric system would no longer apply. It would be as crazy as stubbornly insisting on the geocentric model, where the rest of the universe revolved around the earth, because it was "tradition".
There was no restraining it.
The Blood-Sign system could no longer restrict Shiroyama Kyousuke and the Colorless Little Girl's freedom!!
They moved from Cancer to Leo and Leo to Virgo.
Kyousuke and the White Queen hopped from point to point, but they were now standing on a star so massive the sun was no comparison. It looked like it was a small push away from transforming into a blackhole. Even when stars appeared to be grouped together when viewed from earth, it was not uncommon for there to be mind-boggling distances between them.
The boy and the others descended toe first onto Spica, or Alpha Virginis, like they were making a light hop to avoid a puddle.
That world of ultra-gravity was far too hot for "boiling" to suffice, but Shiroyama Kyousuke and the White Queen did not bat an eye or release a single bead of sweat.
<I can think of worse fates than being stranded in space.>
The half-serpentine Wicked Green Woman began casually speaking despite not having a specialized Box.
Was she able to behave so humanly because she had been summoned by a Divine-class like Shigara Masami, or was she making use of whatever was giving the Colorless Little Girl the ability to speak?
<Relativity links space with time and it's the time you really need to worry about, don't you think? Let's hope you don't have a nice pleasant tour around the universe only to return to earth and find giant dinosaurs stomping around.>
<And when it comes to time, I'm not so sure those protective circles of yours will help much.>
That last comment came from the Yellow Gills who was dozing off in her grotesque cradle.

She claimed reality was no more than a resource used to create dreams, so any problems in this world would be low priority for her. Even now, she was giggling.
<I mean, you can't trust the length of ten minutes right now. That's working in your favor now because it extends how long this lasts, but what if the world 'fast-forwards' and everything ages in an instant? The protective circle supporting you summoners will pop as easily as a bubble and you'll be exposed to the vacuum of space, won't you?>
It was the waitress demon who had a smile freeze on her face.
Yes, Shigara Masami had ultimately abandoned her humanity and become a Divine-class, so she and her squirrel-like animal vessel might not die if dumped into outer space. They might be able to endure it, or they might have some means of returning to somewhere other than this world.
<I won't let that happen.>
But the ponytailed researcher spoke up as if to throw out her advantage.
Shigara Masami actually protected her direct enemy.
<These children have already paid such a large price. And when they shouldn't have had to pay a thing… So they must be given enough happiness to make up for that. I will not let them lose their lives without receiving back anything that was stolen from them. No matter what!!>
A dull sound exploded out.
Shiroyama Kyousuke and the White Queen had been busy while traveling between constellations.
Possible ends of the world left the old tomes behind the Colorless Little Girl, intertwined like a braid, and avalanched toward the White Queen. The White Queen sank her canine tooth into her thumb and used the drops of blood that flowed forth for curses. The curses that were not fully diverted away by the power of the stars slowly but surely ate into the Colorless Little Girl's organs and spine.
As a result, one of the White Queen's arms and the pure white clothing covering it was twisted and colored a bluish-purple and the Colorless Little Girl seemed to expressionlessly puff out her cheeks before coughing up an unbelievable amount of dark red blood.
Of course, the *visual* damage was not necessarily directly linked to the actual limits of their lives. The surface-level injuries would quickly heal.
But the two of them were undoubtedly wearing each other down.
And damage to the soul was an irreparable thing.
This went beyond frightening destructive power. Even when hit by an attack that would likely destroy the entire civilization on the surface of a planet, neither girl let out any kind of cry.
Biondetta glanced over at the pure white and the colorless clashing within the same Artificial Sacred Ground.
"Are you saying you will get between those two?"
<Yes.>

“Do you have any idea what you’re saying, you alcoholic old hag of a teacher? This goes well beyond what you’ve been doing to stop me.”
<I came all this way with Blood-Sign in hand specifically so I could do this. I never wanted to fight one of the children I am supposed to protect, Detta-chan.>
The two Unexplored-classes exchanged another glance.
Whatever their relationship in the other world was, they were supposed to be ruled by fighting instincts and try to kill each other once they were summoned here, but the Wicked Green Woman and the Yellow Gills remained very well behaved. Was that due to the extreme singularity of the White Queen, or was it a result of Shiroyama Kyousuke and the Colorless Little Girl hacking the rules of the Summoning Ceremony?
<To be clear, we’d be killed instantly if we tried to get involved in that.>
<It would be difficult to lure them into the world of sleep when they are so worked up.>
However.
Those two of the glorious Three were not hopeful.
<I am not expecting anything that ridiculous.>
Shigara Masami was quick to respond.
But this just confused Biondetta further.
It was true the White Queen and the Colorless Little Girl were absurdly powerful. No normal Material, not even the Three, could defeat them, so what could a summoner do without her Material?
<Did you forget? I passed Award 1000, moved from this world to the other, and became a new Divine-class.>
The ponytailed researcher answered the unspoken question by slapping the center of her chest with her open palm. She winked as she continued.
<So shouldn’t I have some power as a god in addition to my power as a human summoner? Even if it is a miniscule thing compared to the Colorless Little Girl, whose entire being was artificially embedded in that world.>

Part 4

This was something no one should do.
But it was something everyone dreamed of doing.
It was in fact one ambition Shiroyama Kyousuke himself had once had to suppress within himself.
<Divine-class. Cost: 12. Sound Range: Middle. Color: Dark Blue. Number: 3. Direction: Northeast. Divine Role: Guardian Deity and God of Medicine. Prayer Responsibility: Health.>
This was the power Shigara Masami had been given as one of the divine.
In other words…
<Insert yourself here, deathless world!!!!!!>
A new paranormal power spread from the new god and across the entire world.
The existence of a sun god meant the sun moved through the sky and the existence of a death god meant people had a set lifespan.
In the same way, the existence of the god named Shigara Masami established a previously nonexistent phenomenon.
It was an incomplete elimination of death that did not quite reach total resurrection or rebirth.
That said, it was not built up from nothing.
This deathless world really just expanded the range of the protective circle that guarded a single summoner so that it would instead surround everyone. And unlike the eternally deathless world sought by the Illegal group led by Benikomichi Fuuki, Shigara Masami only temporarily extended people’s time alive to give more of a chance for fatal wounds to be closed up and CPR to be performed.
Its maximum effect only covered this entire world for half an hour.
But since the clash between beings as extreme as the White Queen and the Colorless Little Girl had disturbed the spiritual ground, she would be lucky to get even a tenth of that.
However, with Shiroyama Kyousuke and the Colorless Little Girl’s relativistic interference stretching every second out to eternity, a mere three minutes was like an inescapable cage.
Also.
Shigara Masami was a Divine-class. She was a Material. Yet as a summoner, she was receiving the blessings of a protective circle. That meant the

deathless world created by expanding the protective circle would also apply to the Unexplored-classes like the White Queen.
He must have immediately realized what that meant.
For the first time after hacking the rules of the Summoning Ceremony, Shiroyama Kyousuke looked, glared, and shouted at someone other than the White Queen.
“Shigara Masami! You shouldn’t have done that!!!!!”
Neither human nor Material could be killed now.
No matter what stars they flew to, there would be no resolution to this battle.
<Nii-sama.>
“Brother.”
They spoke almost simultaneously.
<We can never settle this inside the eternal 10 minutes we have created, so I suggest we do something else to reach the definite victory you want, Nii-sama.>
“I really would prefer not to keep punching each other until we have torn away each other’s flesh to the bone and look like zombies. Brother, I have a suggestion. How about we stop this boring ecliptic journey?”
Now it was Shigara Masami’s turn to click her tongue.
She was a god, but only a new one.
Not to mention that a Divine-class could not hope to fully stop the selfish actions of the Unexplored-class.
An eternal 10 minutes was an extraordinary phenomenon for the physical world, but it was not strictly necessary for Kyousuke and the Queen to settle things. If they gave up on fighting during a long journey through space, they could easily throw out that condition.
First, they would use up the deathless three minutes Shigara Masami had created.
They could settle things afterwards.
<Nii-sama, I have analyzed the pattern to the White Queen’s curses. I am certain of it after intentionally letting some hit me. From here on, we do not need the power of the stars to divert their power.>
“You are bluffing. Although perhaps I should call it an admirable bluff.”
<Even if I do take a direct hit, I can still push through and defeat her if I get in a combination of blows before I fall. What should I do, Nii-sama?>
Shiroyama Kyousuke wanted to settle things here. He was guarded by the protective circle himself, but he had already fully cut through the carotid artery on the side of his throat.
He was past the stage where he weighed the risks.
His response was brief.
“Where to?”
“Why not the place you are picturing in your mind right now, brother?”
A moment later, a buzzing similar to a cathode ray tube gave a groan.

Part 5

They descended to a familiar city.
Familiar to both Shiroyama Kyousuke and the White Queen.
The one who tilted their head was the Colorless Little Girl by the boy's side.
Biondetta and Shigara Masami had also returned to the planet. Either as an educator or a guardian, that inexperienced goddess had created a deathless world, but that had not been enough to change things. She bit her lip and checked a nearby road sign.
Yes, this city was not a familiar place for the ponytailed researcher.
<Toy Dream…35?> she muttered.
In the end, they had returned here.
Perhaps Shiroyama Kyousuke saw it as a symbol of victory over the White Queen using only his own power. He had suffered setbacks, defeat, unreasonable violence, and mockery on his way to this point, but this city had to be one of the few positive symbols remaining in his heart.
1g of gravity, an oxygen density of approximately 20%, and an air temperature of 34 degrees Celsius.
Once here, they no longer needed the eternal 10 minutes.
Shigara Masami had created a prison out of a deathless world.
But that would not last forever thanks to the extreme noise created by the clash between the Colorless Little Girl and the White Queen. The fundamental theory behind that Divine-class's ability would collapse and the effect would not last.
They had about three minutes to use up.
So if they did away with the semi-eternally stretched-out relativistic flow of time created to fight out in space, Shigara Masami's deathless world would disappear. And for Kyousuke, this truly was the final battle. Win or lose, his neck wound would start spewing blood as soon as the protective circle vanished.
But that was fine.
The journey through space had only been the opening round.
"Let's start anew, Queen. And end it this time."
"Foolish brother. Nothing you do can ensure your safety now (ng – bh – wi – ou – i – tv – eu – el – zh – i – iu – oo)."
They had found nothing in the farthest reaches of space. Humanity's final frontier was found in their hearts.

The White Queen’s twisted arm returned to normal like a plastic doll filled with air.
The Colorless Little Girl erased any sign of her damage simply by wiping the blood from her mouth with a hand.
“Brother…”
“Queen.”
The tension hung as thick in the air as before a duel using katanas or revolvers sheathed or holstered at the hip.
The exact distance between them was immaterial. Those few meters mattered more than the star twinkling 65 light years away.
And they raised their voices in unison.
“It’s time to say goodbye, you sack of shit!!!!!!”
“It’s time to say goodbye, you sack of shit!!!!!!”

Between the Lines 1

This world has been altered or damaged a few times.
The most notable example would be the Rainy Girl. Umie Shouko was supposedly killed in a random attack in the past, yet she now appeared to have grown up normally and attended a high school in Toy Dream 35's R Block.
Hers was a peaceful life.
So peaceful, in fact, that she considered the intense direct sunlight her greatest enemy.
"God, it's hot… At least I don't have work today, but please don't make it so hot the asphalt melts and the train tracks bend when we have school. Humans aren't meant to live in these conditions."
Her younger sister, who was a stereotypical student librarian with a longish braid and glasses, was complaining to the sun. History had changed, so that younger sister had no memory of fighting in the world of the Summoning Ceremony as Shiroyama Kyousuke's vessel.
The older sister, whose eyesight was good, found it odd that the strict rule to never view the sun through a lens did not seem to apply to glasses.
They were on a parasol-equipped bench near plenty of food trucks filled with coolers of water bottles, Ramune bottles, soda cans, various forms of frozen treats, and even shaved ice.
They remained solidly within the category of ordinary people.
The bespectacled younger sister tore apart a set of two popsicles, and…
"Here, Onee-chan, you can have half. …What, do you not want it???"
"Hmm."
With the packaged popsicle pressed against her soft cheek, the survivor named Umie Shouko casually looked up.
And she spoke to herself.
Before and after, that girl was capable of viewing history from a detached position.
"This is getting really messed up."

Facts

- Only when she is summoned by Kyousuke, the Colorless Little Girl can ignore the protective circle to stand by his side. That is because she is not counted as a threat to his life like other Materials are.
- Instead of using them to summon Materials, Kyousuke uses the Petals to indicate numbers and sounds which freely switch between the Colorless Little Girl's weapons and attributes. This is something like an abbreviated number, so it is far less effort than summoning Materials like normal.
- The White Queen manually controlled the Sword of Truth using the language of the other world.
- An Artificial Sacred Ground can only last about 10 minutes after the Incense Grenade is thrown, but that can be altered by relativistically altering the length of a second. And by altering space, failed shots can be corrected into effective ones. Shigara Masami referred to this as Kyousuke and the Colorless Little Girl hacking the Summoning Ceremony so its rules could not restrict their freedom.
- The White Queen's curses can just barely be avoided by approaching the heavenly bodies forming the 7+3 planets and the 12 zodiacs. But each heavenly body only works once, so there are no second chances.
- As a new goddess, Shigara Masami can make this a deathless world.
- After traveling through space, Kyousuke chose Toy Dream 35 as the location of the final battle. It is estimated that is based on his image of single-handed victory over the White Queen (by summoning the Black Maw).

Stage 02: This is the Chosen Final Stage

“RQ Cat. Standby!”
“Get ready, Sword of Truth. Obey my command (jh – a – ra – ou – v)!!”
(Stage 02 Open 08/23 12:23)
This is the Chosen Final Stage

Part 1

In real time, all of this took only slightly more than three minutes.
They had not arrived at some grand cathedral or temple. This was Toy Dream 35, the city built by the world's largest entertainment corporation in place of a rural city that had collapsed economically. The coastal city included countless attractions like roller coasters and Ferris wheels, its many skyscrapers moved past the coast and rose directly from the ocean surface, and innumerable giant bridges connected those. The intense heat of the midsummer sun must have been too much even for the urban crows because there were very few wild animals at this time of day. The only noise came from the cicadas on the trees planted along the midair bridges and the swimsuit-wearing guests who had descended from the steel and concrete city to enjoy some marine sports.
They were on one of those many bridges.
But despite being a bridge, it extended in every direction like the roundabout access roads leading away from a large train station. Dirt had been piled up afterwards for a nice meetup point with grass, trees, and a small fountain, so it was a lost like a small park at this point.
Pluto and Spica.
Compared to the planets and stars they had visited today, this might seem ordinary and boring.
But neither Kyousuke nor the Queen were laughing.
Tearing up and blowing away some dried and lifeless land they had never before visited would not inspire any emotions at all. But that changed now. This was a living place that played a role in plenty of stories and that had taken root deep in people's souls. They could not allow this to be accidentally blown away. Every single attack would be an opportunity, but it would come with just as much responsibility.
That was how it was with fights to the death.
They could not just throw a lever and hit a button to have victory fall in their lap and they could not stop thinking about it all once they did win.
"Brother."
"What is it, you coward? Are you gonna take the entire city hostage next?"
"No, you chicken. I have only ever been looking at you, brother. What I must do at the ends of the universe is the same thing I must do here on earth. I would prefer you did not start coming up with excuses for after you lose."

“Is fucking all you ever think about, you crazy girl?”
“My, my, what is this chicken even talking about (ob – ob – pi – u – ng – vd)? You don’t even have the guts to accept my advances (du – vo – a – lui – ei – lvz – ya – fu – iu – oo).”
Any attack now came with a risk.
Even if they won, there was still risk involved.
In reality, the true winners were the ones who *never encountered the incident in the first place* and lived in peace.
Then Kyousuke and the Queen spoke simultaneously.
“RQ Cat. Standby!”
“Get ready, Sword of Truth. Obey my command (jh – a – ra – ou – v)!!”
A gust of wind unrelated to the atmospheric pressure blew out in all directions from the Colorless Little Girl and the White Queen. It must have been a strange wind for a mere human like Biondetta. But the Unexplored-classes like the Wicked Green Woman and the Yellow Gills actually tried to flee behind the humans’ protective circles.
That wind was power.
It was the very source of what flowed from the other world to distort this one.
Just like formless electricity could damage the signal carried by a precise circuit, this chaotically scattered power could damage the orderly Materials.
<Gh…>
Shigara Masami held her chest like she was in pain.
Meanwhile, Kyousuke and the White Queen had already begun to move.
The visible number of wounds meant nothing when she could repair them at any time if she wanted.
That made this chess rather than shogi.
Only after gouging into, tearing away, and robbing the functionality of the pieces set up on that human shaped board could they finally pierce the single core and achieve victory.
In other words…
“The Silhouette.”
“So you did indeed think it through that far, brother.”
“We only need to directly destroy your Silhouette!!”
To put it another way, she could only accept it if he crushed anything other than that. Not even the greatest chess player could win against a complete amateur without having a single piece taken.
While their raging power pushed at each other like a powerful wind, it was the Colorless Little Girl who took the first step forward. Was it to protect Shiroyama Kyousuke, or because she feared having the host of her ghostly possession taken from her?
The White Queen responded by taking a step forward as well.
They glared at each other from close range.

And a moment later, their right arms reached out to tear into each other's chests.
The Silhouette was an organ located somewhere in a Material's otherworldly body to carry the vessel's mind. Its location changed from Material to Material, so it could be the brain, the spine, their single horn, the vulnerable scales below the jaw, the third eye, or whatever else. That was the one definite weak point of the Materials summoned with the Blood-Sign system and they would be killed instantly regardless of Cost or Sound Range if it was destroyed.
However, things were different with the Unexplored-classes, who all looked very similar to human girls. For whatever reason, their Silhouette was almost always located in their heart.
The Colorless Little Girl's core shined at the center of her translucent body like a clione.
The few times the White Queen had been seriously injured in the past, Kyousuke had seen the core in her heart.
So.
Therefore.
Once they were in arm's reach of each other, the Little Girl and the Queen showed no mercy. Everything else was secondary as their right arms shot out like spears and pierced the other's chest.
A wet sound of destruction burst out.
The first to smile was the White Queen. She spoke with her fingers still piercing straight through the girl's translucent and undeveloped chest.
"My, my. Nothing there after all this? Did you make a last second decision to flip it horizontally?"
<Nii-sama.>
The Colorless Little Girl had always been expressionless. With her arm crossing past her enemy's and piercing the left side of the White Queen's chest, she silently tilted her head and gave a mechanical report.
<Something within her body is stopping my nails. It appears to be her ribs.>
With several high-pitched sounds, multiple Petals were absorbed by the Spots.
"High #813 (s – et – ag – td). Detonate it there."
"I knew you would say that☆"
A blinding flash of light erupted out.
But it came from the White Queen's wrist before the Colorless Little Girl could do anything. The attack came from the fingertips stabbing into that childish body. A welding-like shine came from the translucent Little Girl's palm a moment later, but she had already been blown away and her hand had left the White Queen's chest.
Her prey had escaped.
She instead detonated the bridge below their feet.

Kyousuke had thrown the Incense Grenade to set up the Artificial Sacred Ground, so a new one would be established wherever he set foot next, be it a wall or the ground.
(It is true brother is in control here.)
But the White Queen saw no reason to wait for that.
She even licked her lips.
(But the Spots needed to accept the Petals disappear during the gap between Artificial Sacred Grounds. That means he cannot give the Colorless Little Girl any instructions in that time. She is defenseless right now. With the wave of a hand, I can remove her entire weak point from her ribcage!!)
Her silver twintails trailed behind her as she lightly walked along the concrete blocks falling from the collapsing bridge. She approached the Colorless Little Girl who could not even recover her balance in midair. The Little Girl had experienced an explosion inside her body, but her Silhouette had not been destroyed. Regardless, she was damaged now. Whether she moved her core to the left or the right, the next attack would tear that Silhouette from her young chest. The White Queen's eyes shined bright as she pursued her prey.
Just then, she noticed something out of the corner of her eye: Kyousuke spinning his Blood-Sign around.
Hitting the White Thorns was meaningless now. The old Artificial Sacred Ground had been destroyed and the Spots for the Petals would not return until the new one had been set up, so not even the godliest skills could earn him a single letter right now.
Then why?
The White Queen questioned it specifically because she had driven him into such a corner.
That was when it happened.
The end of Kyousuke's Blood-Sign did not strike a White Thorn. It hit one of the many concrete blocks pulled down by gravity. He pressed the tip of the rod against it and used the strength of his arms to forcibly push.
Almost like he was pole vaulting.
He repositioned himself.
He used his own body to protect the Colorless Little Girl.
A dull but deafening sound exploded out.
The protective circle guarded summoners against all causes of death, but it was still far from perfect. As soon as the White Queen's fingers were launched forward, her arm was diverted off course by a resistance similar to punching an exercise ball affixed to the wall. Meanwhile, Kyousuke was far from fine. The sturdy barrier meant to protect him bent inwards, slammed into his body, and sent him spinning through the air.
"Brother…"
The girl in love clenched her teeth.
Partially for the simple reason that she had harmed Kyousuke with her own hand, but also because the Colorless Little Girl could freely enter his

protective circle yet she was immediately rejected when she only reached out her hand.
She was only an enemy to him.
Her mere presence nearby was considered a threat to Shiroyama Kyousuke.
“Brotherrrr

slightest confusion in the on-off switching could have reduced him to mincemeat!!)
“RQ Cat. Low #44 (b – fh – fh), standby!!”
<Understood, Nii-sama.>
Yes, it was all for this.
But the most badly injured one here was not the Little Girl or the Queen; it was Shiroyama Kyousuke.
Regardless, the Colorless Little Girl’s attributes were greatly changed.
Several cloths flew in from every which way like white wings, but it was no use. The Colorless Little Girl’s path through the air unnaturally bent, her fist glowed red, and then a fearsome blow tore through all of those defenses and slammed mercilessly into the Queen’s head.
“Kah…!?”
Even her shout was delayed.
The White Queen crashed down to the lower bridge like a meteor.

Part 2

Their goal here was to target each other's Silhouettes. With extraordinary Unexplored-classes like the White Queen and the Colorless Little Girl, the visible wounds were fairly meaningless. Any other wounds or broken bones were no more than the setup needed to restrict their opponent's actions and reach the Silhouette at their core. This may have been similar to moving all the other chess or shogi pieces in order to kill the one and only king.
So…
"Middle #81 (k – et – ag)!!"
The White Queen lay face up on the bridge and the Colorless Little Girl dropped feet-first toward her while also swinging her tail. The attack dropped like a lightning strike and produced a sharp frictional sound similar to a rifle bullet grazing the wall. But the very instant before her heels crushed the left side of the White Queen's chest, the silver-twintailed girl moved. When she slid her slender arms from right to left, the Colorless Little Girl's trajectory bent. She was launched to the side like an invisible wrecking ball had hit her.
Kyousuke reached out his arm toward the undeveloped girl as she spun through the air.
She clung to his wrist in midair and twisted her entire body to wrap herself around the boy's body and safely reach the ground. It was a lot like something from a pair figure skating routine or a pole dance.
The White Queen perfectly understood the situation as she got up from the broken concrete bridge as casually as if she were getting out of a queen-sized bed.
Yes.
She and the Colorless Little Girl were fighting within the same Artificial Sacred Ground, but there was one fundamental difference.
Whether or not Shiroyama Kyousuke acted as an obstacle.
"I'll join in from here on, RQ Cat."
<Okay, Nii-sama.>
"You can even use me as disposable if you want. Getting a finishing blow in on the White Queen takes top priority."
<As you wish.>
The first to rush forward was in fact Shiroyama Kyousuke with his commercial Blood-Sign.
It was the mere human.

But when the Colorless Little Girl kicked off the ground shortly thereafter, she placed her feet on the boy's back and did not hesitate to kick off of him to take a position above the White Queen.
With the sun to her back, the 12 ancient tomes arranged behind her like a clockface all opened at once.
This was the story of a mind-numbing amount of time into the future.
After the sun expanded too far, it roasted all of earth's habitable zones in an inescapable scorching apocalypse. That was the identity of what rushed at the White Queen like a flood.
"Curse you (ru)!!"
She gave a shout.
An invisible shockwave became a solid wall that erased the entire storm of heat and light.
The White Queen thrust out her hand just as the Colorless Little Girl landed, but that was blocked and deflected by an unnatural power.
The translucent and undeveloped girl had rolled back and through the tunnel formed by Kyousuke's legs to arrive behind him. The Queen's pursuing attack had been deflected by the summoner's protective circle.
"Bro-…"
She tossed a white rose decoration straight up.
It burst in midair and shot one million thorns toward the ground.
The Colorless Little Girl's unexpected response was to kick the back of Kyousuke's knees so he would topple backwards, casually grab his back with one hand, and use him as a shield to protect herself.
"…therrrr!!"
Inside the protective circle, a small hand passed below Kyousuke's arm and it held a weapon out toward the White Queen. She had chosen a semiauto shotgun from the many weapons surrounding her hips like a skirt. Her eyes remained dull and mechanical as she whispered.
<Beginning joint attack with Nii-sama.>
"!!!???"
Just as the loud boom sounded, the White Queen's battle costume fluttered around her while she kicked the gun barrel to the side. While the shot scattered in the wrong direction, she tried grabbing the gun with her white-gloved hand. The Colorless Little Girl pulled the gun back to get it within the protective circle and thus out of the White Queen's reach, but it was too late.
(Brother's protective circle might deflect my hand…)
She grabbed it, stole it, and aimed it back at her opponent.
She spun the shotgun around, held it between her head and shoulder, and gave a roar.
"But what happens when it's your power!?"
The explosive noise and shock of the gunshot passed through the Queen's body.

The translucent form was blown away. The undeveloped curves of her chest were blasted apart and the clione-like pulsating light was exposed.
(Not quite enough.)
The Little Girl's face was not twisted in pain or fear.
Although it may have been useless expecting a ghost to respond like the living.
(But if I get in another shot!!)
The Queen did not hesitate to pull the trigger.
However.
That cat that reeked of death was willing to use her summoner to reach victory and her core still remained uncrushed.
That was thanks to a small power.
But that definite power intruded from the side to slightly shift the shotgun barrel to the side before it fired.
It was Shiroyama Kyousuke.
Specifically, the tip of his Blood-Sign.
"Must you stand in my way at every turn!?"
"RQ Cat. High #474 (s – fh – sv – fh), standby."
Even while this close to the action, Kyousuke skillfully struck a White Thorn.
And the Colorless Little Girl obeyed his command.
She obeyed as accurately as possible.
<Okay, Nii-sama. As you wish.>
From directly behind him, she stabbed a spear through his side.

Part 3

Biondetta saw it happen.
<Kh…!!>
Shigara Masami would probably have made a bigger fuss about it since she strived for benevolence, but she was unfortunately too preoccupied at the moment.
Something like a wind was blowing through the area.
That power disturbed this place and it was much too powerful.
For Materials, this place was more dangerous than a star or outer space. The Regulation and Divine-classes would be too stricken by fear to oppose the White Queen and even the Unexplored-class was no match for her. And this place had the Colorless Little Girl on top of that. Not even the Three could maintain a presence while those ridiculous monsters were clashing.
Something like intense static ran through the Yellow Gills before her outlines suddenly collapsed and she was blown away. Shigara Masami's squirrel-like animal vessel was dumped onto the ground in her place.
<When you get down to it, this is their fight. The hierarchy of the Summoning Ceremony is meaningless at this point.>
Shigara Masami herself was propping herself up using her Blood-Sign and it was hard to believe she had not been annihilated as well. She was the Freedom Award 3000 summoner, but she was also a Divine-class. It was odd for her to remain in this world when a much more powerful Unexplored-class had been crushed and annihilated by the pressure.
Plus…
"Wait, your Material was just destroyed, wasn't it? Why haven't you been incapacitated for losing?"
<Who can say. I am a Divine-class right now, so maybe "the shock of seeing a god killed" isn't as strong when it's more like seeing a death of one of my own. Or maybe I'm being protected by the Box that is supporting my presence outside of the Blood-Sign system.>
That meant she could pretend to lose while secretly being just fine. Crafty Biondetta could think of many different ways of using that ability.
The waitress demon's own Material, the Wicked Green Woman, was also filled with static. Her outlines had already begun to collapse, so she was unlikely to last long. And Biondetta did not have any tricks up her sleeve like Shigara Masami did.
"So this is it, huh?"

<What are you talking about, Detta-chan? You are probably the last one here who can move.>
But the ponytailed researcher, who acted like the children's guardian, said something unexpected.
According to her…
<I somehow escaped being incapacitated by my loss in the Summoning Ceremony, but I am a Material and I cannot last long in this pressure from the Queen and Little Girl's battle. To be blunt, I'm barely hanging on as things are, so moving around is out of the question. That means only you can move freely, Detta-chan. But that ends once the Wicked Green Woman breaks down on her own.>
"…"
<There is no time, so decide here and now what it is you want to do.>
Shigara Masami looked Biondetta straight in the eye and spoke as plainly as possible.
<Set aside the Queen's hatred that lives inside you, set aside your revenge business you love to indulge in, and set aside your assigned role as an older sister. What does Biondetta Shiroyama want to do in the very, very end? No matter how it happened, you took Kyousuke-kun's hand. Were you really only acting based on some mechanical rules? This can only lead to ruin as things are, but you have the chance to *throw a wrench in the works* no matter how small it is. So take responsibility and choose. Will you steer things in a kinder direction, or a crueler one? You once took Kyousuke-kun's hand, so what kind of future do you want to see now!?>

Part 4

Red. Blood red. On Kyousuke's own orders, the Unexplored-class stabbed a spear into his back, producing a venomously bright color.
Even the White Queen.
Even her thoughts briefly ground to a halt.
But her body moved all on its own. She twisted with all her might to escape the bloody tip of the spear, but then the entire spear shook unnaturally.
The protective circle had reacted.
The Colorless Little Girl had been reclassified from harmless little sister to life-threatening evil spirit.
But how foolish could that protective circle be? Deflecting the spear after it had already pierced through Kyousuke would not allow him to avoid it.
All it did was widen the pierced summoner's wound and pursue the White Queen with an unnatural change of direction.
"!? Khahhh!!!!!!"
It hit her.
It stabbed into her just below the navel.
With the spear pinning her in place, the White Queen saw the Colorless Little Girl let go of the spear and poke her head out from behind Kyousuke who she had used as cover.
The translucent girl spread her five fingers as if preparing to claw at the air.
Did she intend to directly target the Queen's Silhouette if she had the slightest opportunity?
"Why go this far?"
That question was not directed at the black cat who reeked of death.
With a red trail of blood dripping from the corner of her mouth, the White Queen was of course staring straight at the boy.
"Do you have no fear of death, brother?"
"When you get down to it, I'm just a puny human. I couldn't even earn a thousand Awards. So I can never reach your level if I worry about life and death like normal. That was how I had to look at it."
He had already been fatally wounded.
But even if there was no saving him, was repeatedly taking even more wounds really the logical and efficient thing to do as a human?
"But I know how frightening you are."
What did the boy think of how the White Queen's face had crumpled up?

What did he think about the Alice (with) Rabbit name he had tasked himself with?
“It isn’t just how strong you are in a fight. In fact, the real terror comes from your ability to distort the world around you with your mere presence. It’s reached the point where everyone in the world would say you’re blameless despite everything you’ve done … There’s no use trying to argue. That’s why I decided to use that power against you.”
“What are you-…wait, you don’t mean…”
“I will die here.”
He was blunt about that.
Could a high priest with a century of mental training have accepted it so resolutely?
No…
“And I don’t mind if I die. Not as long as I’ve set things up so the battle can continue afterwards. I was still skeptical with Elvast, but Shigara Masami’s presence confirmed it for me. Humans can become a Divine-class if the conditions are right… So it isn’t over even if I lose.”
“You can’t mean it…”
Humans and gods.
But when the myths were viewed academically, the distinction in definitions could be vague. The gods created humans and gods were defined by human worship. So what if you could intentionally control that act of worship? More specifically, what if someone could spread a convenient form of worship throughout the world?
“Brother, are you saying you created an original religious text that rewrites you as a Divine-class Material!?”
When Shigara Masami had appeared without warning and sided with the White Queen, Shiroyama Kyousuke had refused to come out of his cruiser’s bed with the covers pulled over his head.
But did you really think that was all he was doing?
Freedom Award 3000. She had gone beyond even Elvast Toydream. Did you really think he was simply wallowing in despair after seeing that new territory opened before his eyes?
With a tablet, anyone could create a collection of data using only their fingertips.
“There once was a boy who refused to budge an inch in his battle against the White Queen’s tyranny.”
Yes.
It was the story of a fall.
It was the story of a hopelessly reckless and foolish attempt.
But it was the kind of story that contained a hidden beauty that inspired people to tell it and spread it around.
“Maybe I can’t accomplish anything on my own, but the connection to you and your extreme distortions will evolve this document into a legend. So

even a puny human will be given the chance to become a god. Although it might take centuries or millennia for it to sufficiently cover the world."
The White Queen provided cheap emotions filled with artificial colors and flavors.
But again and again, this boy had seen how everything was manipulated and destroyed by those things.
Humans would seek out the simplest things, indulge in them, and support them.
After fighting that powerful current on his own for so long, the boy was making a major change of direction here.
"If I win, it ends here. If I lose, I will eventually have my chance. …So it doesn't matter to me either way."
He moved his bloody mouth.
And his sticky hands grabbed the spear that had pierced him on his own command.
He would throw out his own life if it would create even the slightest opening.
Thinking back, his actions had been consistent from that initial moment when he slit the side of his throat.
(But…)
The White Queen had her doubts.
She may have noticed this only because she had spent so long pursuing this person she had never stopped loving.
(But is this really brother's logic? Even if his story spreads and people begin to believe that recklessly standing up to me is the right thing to do, that will lead people all over the world to do the same. How many doomed attempts will be made and lives lost in the centuries or millennia before he becomes a Divine-class? This might be logical, but it does not sound like something he would strive for. Then someone must be guiding him this way. Someone must be steering him toward this action that is so unlike him.)
The White Queen bit her lip.
Shiroyama Kyousuke raised his voice to rely on someone other than himself.
"So do it, RQ Cat!! Win or lose, I won't hold it against you! Just give this a proper endiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiing!!!!!!"
She was within firing range.
The Colorless Little Girl's chest had been destroyed by the shotgun blast and the faint pulsating glow of her Silhouette was exposed, but the White Queen could not move from that spot with the spear piercing her lower stomach. She could not get that final attack in.
<Okay, Nii-sama. If that is what you want.>
Still expressionless, the Colorless Little Girl accurately circled to the Queen's blind spot while the twintailed girl could not even twist around.
She only had to swing her small fingers as if tearing through the air to gouge into the center of the White Queen's chest and end this.
There was no reconciliation.

There was no talking it out.
There was no attempt at mutual understanding.
All of that was eliminated by this brute force resolution.
(Kh!!)
An unpleasant tearing sound came from the White Queen’s body as she tried to forcibly aim the shotgun around, but she could not manage it.
She did not care if she lost.
She did not care if that loathsome hand tore into her weak point and exposed it to the open air.
But.
However.
Did they really expect the White Queen to help remake her beloved into some strange monster they called a god!?
(Brother!!)
She bit her lip.
And then an explosive sound rang out.

Part 5

That settled it.

Part 6

The Colorless Little Girl slowly tilted her head with her right hand's fingers still partially bent. And with that pose intact, she looked down at her own chest. She acted just like a small girl looking down to see if some meat sauce had splattered on her favorite clothes, but this was something else. There should have been a fist-sized light glowing like a clione in the center of her translucent body.
She had already been hit once by the shotgun the White Queen had stolen. The undeveloped girl's faint curves had been blown away and the rhythmically throbbing light of her Silhouette had been exposed to the open air.
Just one more hit – even the slightest scratch – would have killed her instantly in that state.
However.
The White Queen should not have been able to make that final attack.
"…"
Then what had caused that explosive noise in that final moment?
It had not come from the Colorless Little Girl or the White Queen.
"Khah…"
There was another summoner in the Artificial Sacred Ground, even if she had been ignored as not a threat.
Freedom Award 920, Liar Cat.
The silver Blood-Sign that Biondetta Shiroyama so loved functioned both as the Summoning Ceremony tool and as a bolt-action sniper rifle.
Just one more attack had been necessary.
Even the slightest scratch.
A normal army was no match for even the Original Series at the very bottom, but Materials were not actually defended by the protective circles.
After stepping away from Kyousuke and with her Silhouette exposed by her destroyed chest, a normal bullet with no connection to the occult was enough to shatter that critical weak point that was like a self-destruct switch requiring only a gentle push.
"You want to continue this in a few centuries or millennia?"
She laughed weakly.
But separate from that, the waitress demon, who had replaced half her bones with artificial ones, made oddly precise movements.

This was not the revenge helper fueled by the Queen's hatred or the older sister given her position by the adults.
She spoke here as the human being named Biondetta.
"You really are dumb. No matter how ridiculous and selfish it is, it doesn't count as revenge if it doesn't satisfy your heart, Kyousuke-chan."
And.
However it had happened, a conclusion was a conclusion.
<Nii-sama…>
There was still no fear or pain.
Her voice was flat and emotionless.
Yet it carried the slightest hint of a small child being abandoned in an unfamiliar city.
<I will always…be with you, Nii-sama.>
She could say nothing more.
That extraordinary Unexplored-class's Silhouette had been destroyed, so she was killed instantly. Her body collapsed and disappeared, leaving behind the silver-haired shrine maiden named Meinokawa Aoi who had been supporting her existence.
As for Shiroyama Kyousuke…
"Ahh…"
The White Queen thought she was going to collapse on the spot.
She felt no joy in her victory.
In fact, the true despair began here. After all, Kyousuke had slit his throat in the protective circle and had his side pierced by the spear meant for the White Queen.
Yes, that spear had not vanished even after the Colorless Little Girl herself had.
It was still there.
Pinning the White Queen in place must have been her top priority to the very end, so she had left behind some kind of clever trick.
In other words…
(This is not the spear itself. Just like with my attacks, did she tear into the space of both worlds and thoroughly coat the surface of the spear with the wreckage!?)
It was similar to adding gold leaf to a blade. Even if the blade within disappeared, the gold leaf on the outside would remain. And the "wound" left by that spatial rift was far stronger than any heavy metal or composite armor.
That alone was enough.
So what would happen without the protective circle preserving his life?
"Ahhhh."
This battle had not been between two summoners, so the White Queen did not take over the Artificial Sacred Ground after winning.
So.

There was no 90 seconds of leeway for starting a Chain. The Artificial Sacred Ground ended immediately.
Of course.
That also applied to Kyousuke's protective circle that was supported by the Artificial Sacred Ground.
"Ahhhh

down onto the bridge together. She could only consider it lucky the spear piercing his stomach had not caught on the ground.
(No…)
Her mind went blank, but her arms moved all on their own. The white Sword of Truth battle costume wriggled, balled up, and pressed against the wound on the side of his neck. The bleeding had to be stopped no matter what. She could not allow even one more drop to be spilled, yet the cloth was dyed red in no time.
(No.)
It would not stop.
She could not stop the life from leaking out of him.
She had done everything she could to treat him. She was the White Queen and her true value went beyond simple destructive power, but not even her perfect treatment was enough to handle something on this level.
This went beyond the depth of the wound or the amount of blood lost.
The problem was how Shiroyama Kyousuke showed no resistance to death or attachment to life.
Almost like he was being dragged away by the vanishing ghost of his sister.
“…p me (jg – ra).”
And.
The White Queen gave up on logical thought.
Her face crumpled up, she did not bother wiping the tears from her eyes, and she redirected all her strength to her voice.
Even though she knew from the beginning it would never reach him.
“Please no (nc – pa)! Help me (jg – ra)!!
Brotherrrr

Part 7

The Colorless Little Girl had been defeated.
That meant there was one thing to check on.
And since Shiroyama Kyousuke was pale from bleeding out, it may have been better to observe Meinokawa Aoi, his partner vessel, than the boy himself.
She was like a baby.
She was curled up on her side on the broken bridge with her thumb in her mouth. That would normally be unthinkable for her, but you must not forget.
She had lost a Summoning Ceremony battle.
The god she had believed in and worshiped had been killed before her eyes.
The shock of that would leave the loser unable to resist any kind of external stimulus for more than 24 hours. They would enter a defenseless and mindless state where they would repeat a simple action and unconditionally grab at a finger waved in front of their face. That penalty may have been a fate worse than death.
(Ah…)
One person's eyes wandered vaguely.
That person was Shiroyama Kyousuke.
He had lost all mental resistance and his body was headed toward death.
Treatment from the White Queen might have been enough to save him, but after losing, he lacked the willpower to even try to live.
However.
Unbeknownst to him, there was a single exception: Government Award 1000, Elvast Toydream. Shiroyama Kyousuke might not remember since he had lost his battle against that man, but it was not the Summoning Ceremony that brought an end to that fight.
Lu Niang Lan.
When she was in that mindless state of loss where she could only repeat a simple action over and over, what had she done because the action was carved so deeply into her soul?
She had driven her fist into Elvast Toydream's heart, destroying it.
(…Ah…)
So after losing in the Summoning Ceremony, the human soul was stripped bare. All the camouflage and sweet lies were removed, exposing the hidden

instincts and desires that the person could not bring themselves to face.
That was part of what made this a fate worse than death.
“…p me (jg – ra).”
So.
What if those words reached that boy’s ears?
Normally, it never could have happened.
With the many veils of reason, guilt, anger, and humiliation covering it, his true soul hidden deep down may have never made it to the surface.
But.
However.
The Colorless Little Girl’s defeat left him with no pride or self-respect.
He could not even lie to himself while under the effects of this penalty.
…Deep down, he had known that the White Queen had done nothing wrong.
He had known that, but he still could not forgive her. He had worked so hard to protect something in that small house even as he was beaten. He had hesitantly reached out in the Queen’s Miniature Garden to build up a new mountain of sand for himself. But when those treasures were destroyed, the sorrow had been too much to bear and he had converted it into anger.
He had found nothing other than being the strongest to rely on.
It may have been wrong to even try to compare a dangerous love to a family’s love. They belonged to different categories. It was as absurd as using the exact same ruler to measure whether your mother or your schoolteacher cared more about your future or to measure whether your little sister or your girlfriend was nicer to you.
Family was family, friends were friends, and lovers were lovers.
There was no contradiction in using separate rulers to measure each category.
So…
“Please no (nc – pa)! Help me (jg – ra)!!
Brotherrrr

This was not of his free will.
It was not a conscious act.
Nevertheless, his hand slowly reached out and wiped the tears from the girl’s eyes.
And he spoke clearly.
“…As you wish.”
Freedom Award 903, Alice (with) Rabbit.
This was the moment when that name carved deep in his soul rose to the surface.

Between the Lines 2

Shiroyama Kyousuke was already barely conscious in that mindless state of defeat.
But one thing remained in his mind as it faded in and out.
He had sliced through his own carotid artery.
And then he had intentionally taken one of the Colorless Little Girl's Unexplored-class attacks despite being a flesh-and-blood human.
There was a limit to what miracles the White Queen's battle costume could bring about. Not even wrapping it around the wounds like bandages could overturn death.
The costume was just a costume; it was not the Queen herself.
So…
"Not yet…"
The White Queen bit her lip.
There was no need to tear into her flesh with her canine tooth. Her side had already been skewered by the Colorless Little Girl's spear. She really should have been coughing up blood already, so she got what she needed simply by bringing the rusty taste in her throat up onto her tongue.
A red drop.
That liquid was more beautiful than any natural gemstone.
She did not care about her own injures. For an Unexplored-class with such exceptional power, the number and severity of the surface wounds was not all that important. The human was what mattered now. This boy could not be saved in the same way. If he died, then it was over.
She could sacrifice herself as many times as it took.
Because she had found something she cared about more than anything else in either world.
"I won't let it end here. I will not, no matter what it takes."

This was a miracle of blood.
It was the greatest of divine acts that required she reject her own color to save that boy.
Her soft hands held the boy's cheeks.
She softly shut her eyes.
And.
There was no sound.
Lips touched lips and she forced her supernatural medicine deep into his throat.
The rusty flavor reached him.
It reached his tongue and his stomach.
There was no greater blessing and she had used it to save just the one life.
And.
Shiroyama Kyousuke's heart finally approached stability.
But nothing was certain yet.
She took his arm and lent him her shoulder. She needed somewhere – anywhere – that was safe enough for the summoner to rest.
His limp body was disturbingly heavy.
The White Queen could lift the entire universe while humming a tune if she wanted, but she felt like this weight would crush her.
"…ry."
"Brother."
"I'm sorry, *Mary.*"
The White Queen softly bit her rust-flavored lip.
She refused to let him die.
She swore that to herself once more as she took a step forward.
This was by no means an easy path for her. She still had the wound from the Colorless Little Girl's spear piercing her side along with Kyousuke's, so dark red blood dripped out whenever she tensed up even a little.
But even so.
She had to do this.
The twintailed girl clenched her teeth, lent the limp boy her shoulder, and dragged her own body along to keep walking.
If it had been possible, she had wanted to shake the boy awake when he overslept and feed him the breakfast she had made.
If it had been possible, she had wanted to live in the same world as him, attend the same school, study in the next desk over in the same classroom, and play in the pool with him.
If it had been possible, she had wanted to rush to the battlefield when he was in danger and fight alongside him.
But where was she supposed to go?
Was there anywhere that would lead to that bright future?
<Aika Toydream.>
A graceful voice reached her.

At some point, a woman with a long black ponytail had approached the boy and the girl. She was Shigara Masami, Freedom Award 3000 and a Divine-class.
<His blood pressure seems to have stabilized, but this isn't over yet. With the unpredictable rocking of the waves, bringing him to his cruiser increases the risk of his wounds reopening, so using his friend's apartment would probably be best.>
"…"
The lonely girl weakly brushed aside the woman's outstretched hand.
Shigara Masami.
The White Queen could display a different expression than normal in front of her. She could react in a different way than she could around an extreme exception like Shiroyama Kyousuke.
"I will bow my head to whoever I must. If they demand I apologize, I am willing to cry and beg and humiliate myself."
It could be heard to tell with her head lowered, but the girl was definitely sniffling.
That action seemed so far removed from the title of Queen.
"But saving brother is my job. Do not interfere, Shigara Masami."
There was no logic there.
It was a desire to have him to herself and it was very similar to the immature stubbornness of a child.
Shigara Masami made no attempt to argue.
In fact, she sighed and relaxed her shoulders. And she stepped aside to clear the way.
But not for the fearsome peak of the Unexplored-class.
She may have done this because she felt she could trust that look of a stubborn girl.
And was it the boy's reckless attempts to challenge her that had ultimately drawn out that look? Anyone could see those attempts had been misguided, but if he had not taken that so seriously, neither he nor the girl may have ever reached the honest feelings within them. Being too good at things could be a problem at times.
And the adult woman had more to say.
<Continue this way and you will reach a park. Turn east there to reach another bridge. The apartment building you want is located there.>
After hearing that, the White Queen slowly resumed walking while lending Shiroyama Kyousuke her shoulder. She did not include any strange supernatural phenomena like flying through the sky or warping through three-dimensional space. There was no room for that. This was her story. She would not allow any third party to interfere with that, even if they were a god or a demon.
She absolutely refused to let go here.
She could not allow her knees to give out here.
There was no need to fight.

And there probably never had been.

Facts

- By turning his beliefs into an original religious text about the heroism of standing up to the White Queen to the bitter end, Shiroyama Kyousuke hoped to create his own legend that would make him a Divine-class without reaching Award 1000. He guessed it would take centuries or millennia for the legend to spread across the entire world, but it is unknown whether or not this method would have actually worked.
- The Colorless Little Girl was defeated by human Biondetta.
- When the Silhouette is exposed to the open air, it can be destroyed by normal attacks not belonging to the Summoning Ceremony. If even the thinnest layer had been in the way, Biondetta's gunshot would have been deflected.
- In a battle between summoners, the winner has the right to keep the fight going with a Chain, but if a winner is determined in any other situation, the Summoning Ceremony and protective circle are removed immediately.
- Beyond the veils of self-deception and rejection, it was a desire to save even the White Queen that smoldered deep within Kyousuke's soul.

Stage 03: The True Enemy Was With Us All Along

“You only have two options, but a wrong answer means a full-power slap.”
“And refusing to answer guarantees that happens☆”
(Stage 03 Open 08/24 13:30)
The True Enemy Was With Us All Along

Part 1

Shiroyama Kyousuke's vision gradually recovered
"…"
It took him a while to realize he was lying down somewhere. The cruiser he used as a home did not have a bed this large and soft, but he detected none of the disinfectant smell of a hospital. After staring up at the familiar ceiling for a long, long while, it finally clicked why it was familiar.
This was Aika's high-rise apartment.
He was alive.
He was supposed to have died whether he won or lost, yet here he was alive. He seriously doubted this was something he had caused himself.
(The Queen.)
So there was only one answer.
(It had to be the White Queen.)
Now that it was over, he found his emotions were not boiling over anymore. That may have been due to his head being too heavy or due to the opposite. To keep a gas burner going, it had to be fed a constant supply of gas. If the supply was ever cut off, it needed another spark to reignite.
He had been given a chance to stop.
So where he would go next was up to him.
He would have died long ago if not for the White Queen.
Over and over, she had disgraced herself for that.
"The answer was staring me in the face the whole time, dammit."
When the boy said that, what event was he thinking back on? That small prison of a house, that lab deep underground, or that bridge not long ago?
A still silence surrounded him.
Until he heard an ominous voice from the same bed as him.
"Hee hee hee. Now Onii-chan really is mine. He can't move right now, so I need to win him over with an explosion of familial intimacy only possible with a cute little sister in a swimsuit and apron. Yes, and if I play my cards right, I can even get him to leave Freedom and join Government."
"Don't be ridiculous. Kyousuke-chan is joining us in Illegal. Yes, he's sure to make a delicious meal for a beautiful young woman like me. I have always thought his crazy ideas were too much for Freedom. Joining Illegal is the only real choice for him at this point."
"What are you two doing?" asked Kyousuke while lifting up the blanket with an annoyed look.

He found a striped bikini and a modified China dress below.
“Oh, Kyousuke-chan. You’re back to normal? I was hoping for a little more of Marionette Kyousuke-chan who obediently opens his mouth when you tell him to say ‘ah’.”
“If only he’d been a little less obedient so I could’ve gone with the ultimate special move of nursing: mouth-to-mouth medicine delivery.”
This was sounding worse by the second.
His memories were cloudy after the sniper shot that took out the Colorless Little Girl, but what had happened since then?
“Ghh.”
He somehow managed to sit up.
Simply lifting his upper body from the soft bed sent a chain reaction of dull pain through his body.
He checked the bedside digital clock to find it was August 24. About a full day had passed since his clash with the White Queen. His memories were correct. He had lost and was rendered mindless by the penalty.
Then he looked down at his own body.
His hoodie and shirt had been removed. His upper body was instead wrapped with what looked like bandages, but had to be something more. The broad white strips were even smoother than silk. They had been concentrated around his right side. Something felt odd when he tilted his head, so he reached up and found similar cloth wrapped around his neck. Those were the two obvious wounds, but he also had bruises all over and damage from overworking muscles he did not usually use. He clearly ached in more places than he had visual wounds.
And more importantly…
(So I survived.)
That was honestly the most unexpected part.
Win or lose, he should have died from blood loss once the battle ended and the protective circle vanished. It had been a true fight to the death and that must have had an effect on him. He could also thank his reliance on the Colorless Little Girl, but he had drawn out more of his potential as a summoner than ever before.
Receiving such a blessing and escaping without paying the price should not have been possible.
Or so he had thought.
“…”
He looked down at his hands and thought for a while.
He had definitely cut his carotid artery. Sliced all the way through it. He doubted any normal first aid could have saved his life after that.
Yes.
Normal.
“Onii-chan? That’s odd. He has a swimsuit-wearing little sister clinging to him and he isn’t responding. This requires removing the final seal. Time to untie the forbidden knot below the covers.”

“Only an immature little girl would find this to be a problem. An adult like me sees this as an opportunity. It’s time to touch him all over and find his weak points!!”
Those two were making it hard to think, so he kicked them out of the bed and found he could move more than expected.
A white cloth.
That color represented the salvation of a certain Unexplored-class.
A quiet knock came at the door.
The 5m white liger had been curled up on the large room’s floor, but now her ears perked up and she looked over. Kyousuke also focused on the door and took a deep breath.
He knew what had happened.
He knew what choice he had made while barely conscious.
And *she* was beyond that thin door.
Since Aika and Lu Niang Lan were so relaxed, this could not be as tense a situation as he felt like it was. It was already over. But that did not mean the gears were going to turn smoothly right away.
Still, Shiroyama Kyousuke decided to move forward.
“Come in.”
How much strength had it taken to speak those two short words?
In the past, he had focused on simply being the strongest and he had kept away the pain by pushing away anything he did not like. But how much more effort had it taken to take this step forward now?
The knob turned.
The thin door slowly opened.
The face that hesitantly peeked in was indeed white.
Except…
“B-brother, have you woken up?”
“I am really not sure what to say to you right now.”
There were…two of her?
Two identical girls with silver twintails!?

“Wait, wait, wait!! I’ve changed! I decided to try talking it out with you! I made a decision as agonizing as disemboweling myself, so why are you perfectly fine!? And are you multiplying again like in Houbi Village!?”
It hit him after he said it.
Houbi Village.
Yes, hadn’t there been a divine image identical to the Queen hidden back behind the Meinokawa Shrine?
She was the oldest artificial vessel and the definitive Joruri Method.
“Aoi!! Are you screwing with me!?”
But despite Kyousuke’s accusation, the two silver-twintailed girls only exchanged a glance.
And with identical tilts of the head, they spoke in stereo.
“Sigh. I really am the White Queen, so I don’t know what to say when you get angry at me for not being me.”
“Brother, does this mean you can’t tell us apart? After saying ‘as you wish’ to me!?”
Kyousuke could not answer.
This was way too hard!!
The one on the right put her hands behind her head and the one on the left put her hands on her hips.
They both pouted their lips like a sulking child and continued speaking.
“If you really can’t tell, then why not take a good hard look to compare us?”
“Just ask if you want a hint. This battle costume might be confusing you, so I can always remove it one piece at a time if you ask.”
He made the wise decision.
“I’m not messing with-…”
“You only have two options, but a wrong answer means a full-power slap.”
“And refusing to answer guarantees that happens☆”
He wisely chose to make an attempt.
The two White Queens climbed into the bed on all fours. But when he glanced over everything from the bodylines running along their spines and even the individual eyelashes decorating their eyelids, he could not find any difference between them.
A general look was not enough.
He needed to pinpoint target the details.
“Now, brother. Are you going to count my moles?”
“You don’t have any moles.”
“Oh, dear. It seems you already know my body quite intimately.”
A wrong answer would mean losing his head to a slap more powerful than a gray bear wandering the Siberian wilderness. He needed to get back to the basics and not let their seemingly identical appearance fool him. What parts of the body were most unique between different people? After thinking of a certain identification system, he knew where he had to look.
And with that, the atmosphere changed somewhat.
Once he got started, there was no stopping Kyousuke.

“First, the eyes.”
“Hyah!”
He placed his hands on the right Queen’s soft cheeks and peered deep into her eyes. There were identification systems that specifically used the iris instead of general facial recognition.
“U-um, uh, brother, uh.”
“…”
He was up against a slap from the Queen. A single wrong answer could seriously spell the end for him, so he wanted as many sources of information as he could get. He absentmindedly rubbed the right Queen’s smooth cheeks while thinking. What other part of the body was used to identify people?
(The teeth.)
That was a standard form of identifying corpses.
So Kyousuke slid his index finger over to the right Queen’s soft lips. More than that, he pushed it inside, bent it in a J-shape, and pried open her white teeth.
“Mgh!? Hamyahwabahbah!! H-hroher?”
They were perfect.
This was hardly surprising, but he doubted her teeth were weak enough that she ever needed to visit a dentist.
He pulled his finger out and wiped it off on the edge of the blanket.
“Okay, now this one.”
“Wait, hold on, you just had that Queen sucking on that- nbhh, mmghghgh!?”
The left Queen shook her head in protest, but he shoved it in regardless. There were tears in her eyes.
Meanwhile, Kyousuke wished he had thought to get a penlight first. He gave up on trying to use his vision, so he shut his eyes and slowly traced his index finger along the top and bottom row of teeth. …It was a lot like reading braille, but his first impression was that the two Queens were identical.
“Ahh…ahm, ahm. Hah hoo higured it out het, hroher?”
The left Queen must have felt restless when he started ignoring her again because she stayed on all fours while pursuing his fingertip with her warm tongue.
But it was too soon.
He was still not sure, so he could not give an answer yet.
He considered using fingerprints or palmprints. Those had been used to identify people in criminal investigations for more than a century. He removed the Queens’ long gloves before poking and prodding their hands. Gait and posture could be used to track people, so to be absolutely certain, he traced his fingers along their backs and down to their butts while they stood there on all fours. His eyes followed his fingers along their path.

(Hm. I went on and on about how much I hate her, but there's a lot I didn't know about her.)
"I-Is it just me or are we leaving that bittersweet atmosphere behind? Hyah☆ Brother, I only turned this into a problem to solve because I thought it would give you an excuse, so you don't have to take it so seriously!!"
"Hyah! Maybe I should have had you take a photo so I could use that to – nh! – my advantage later on."
They should have known better. For better or for worse, this thoroughbred summoner had inherited Doctor S's genes and learned from Shigara Masami, so challenging him to a game had been a mistake.
That said, it was impressive that not even Kyousuke could tell the difference between them. Although the praise there should go to the Joruri Method instead of the White Queen.
So Shiroyama Kyousuke gave up on telling them apart visually.
Instead, he hugged the one on the right.
"Hyah!?"
"…"
And he squeezed her.
He repeated the action a few times like a child trying to choose a giant stuffed animal or body pillow at the store and then he moved on to the left one.
"This one, on the left. You're the White Queen, aren't you?"
"Gwah, how could you tell, boy!?"
The abandoned one on the right suddenly stopped calling him "brother".
And she rolled along the bed.
Except her head rolled further than her body. Her head had popped off.
Meanwhile, the left one – the real White Queen – placed her hands on her red cheeks while letting him continue to hug and squeeze her.
"W-wow, ha ha ha. I did not expect you to tell us apart by how we feel in your arms, brother. W-wowww."
(Except it was really because you're wearing the same thing that's wrapped around me.)
…After finding nothing at all different about their appearances, he had decided to instead rely on the texture of the Sword of Truth battle costume that human civilization could not possibly duplicate. That had been a wise decision. Although if he said so, he would receive a double slap and probably be labelled an extreme underwear fetishist who was more interested in the fabric than the soft skin below.
After rolling around on the large bed some more, Meinokawa Aoi (Had she made that costume herself like Shiroyama Kyoumi had? Or was it supplied by the shrine?) grabbed her disembodied head, shoved it back onto her neck, and returned those distinctive twintails to her usual long hair.
"By the way, don't you need to change his bih – ei…that is, his tourniquet? You did say it is a double-edged sword that helps the wound heal faster but also increases the risk if it festers or he gets tetanus."

“Oh, that’s right. Brother, it’s fresh bandage time again. Okay, raise your arms for me.”
…“Again”.
She seemed quite accustomed to this. The teenage boy known as the strongest summer was very reluctant to consider what had happened over the past 24 hours.
“Hold on. Let’s stop for a second!! You don’t have to explain everything that’s happened, but since I’m awake now, I can do this on my own.”
“Remote hug☆”
The White Queen made a hugging motion in the empty air.
All the bandages wrapped around Kyousuke’s upper body squeezed him like a vise.
“Bgweh!?”
“To be clear, you gave yourself these wounds on your neck and side, so for once, I have no reason whatsoever to feel guilty.”
She was smiling.
The White Queen grinned as she spoke.
“And the tourniquet (bih – ei – ni – de) keeping you alive is made from the battle costume I am wearing. These cute things are so spoiled and demanding, so I really doubt they will obey anyone else’s orders.”
“…!? ~ ~ ~!!”
“Hey, Queen. Isn’t he going to die like this?”
“Brother needs to be treated a little roughly. I am the Queen, so I will dominate even my partner. And I must say, brother, you get 0 points for trying to kill yourself like that! Try harder next time!!”
“This really isn’t the time to get all cutely upset with him. His side is one thing, but the neck bandages are strangling him. His face is turning blue.”
“Oh, no! Brother! Why do you always keep everything to yourself!? You should have told me before your face turned blue and then white!!”
He had been physically unable to voice an SOS with the bandages so tight around his throat, so the White Queen really needed to learn more about basic human anatomy.
At any rate, she loosened the neck bandages before he started foaming at the mouth.
But loosening them caused a change of its own. When all the blood rushed to his head, he grew lightheaded and the White Queen used that opening to remove all the tourniquets and prepare a wet towel.
“Okay, brother. Time to wipe you down in lieu of a bath.”
“Wait, you don’t have to do that!”
“Complain while you can. Read from that tablet, my bootleg.”
“Sure thing. Let’s see… ‘In that moment, Shiroyama Kyousuke decided to throw himself into the fated battle. His enemy was the White Queen and he would continue to stand up to her even if the rest of the world supported her and he was left all alone.’ ”
His heart stopped.

His tongue blocked his throat.
Kyousuke held the left side of his chest while trembling violently despite his stopped heart and the White Queen smiled and made a suggestion after gently bringing him back to this world.
“Do we need to read more?”
“Ah, ah, ahhh.”
“Broootherrr? I skimmed through that original religious text you wrote to ascend to godhood and it was quite well made☆ Oh, how about we give it some random title and pretend to be a novelist? Yes, that is a great idea. How about calling it Unexplored Summon://Blood-Sign? 3 trillion PVs or bust!☆”
“Ababbababababababaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaahhhh

Part 2

Now that he was awake, he could not just lie around anymore.
“Okay.”
“Brother?”
When he got up out of the unnecessarily-large bed, the White Queen called out to him from where she had been seated next to him.
“Where are you going? I can bring you anything you need.”
“I have to do it myself. That’s how rehab works.”
He held out a hand to stop her, but she refused to listen. The silver twintailed girl grabbed his wrist, wrapped her arms around his, and supported his weight.
She held his arm to her chest and placed her head on his shoulder.
“Then I will go with you.”
“This is kind of embarrassing.”
“Brother, do you know how sunny it is outside? It is 2PM on August 24.”
She glared at him while saying that.
And regardless, if he tried to resist, it was obvious she would push him back into the bed. When it came to a simple contest of strength, a human like him had no way of winning.
He let out a long sigh and spoke.
“Fine, then.”
“Yay☆”
She smiled so brightly he suspected she would have danced a little jig if she had not been supporting his weight. He always had to wonder why these little things could influence her emotions so much. That was a foreign world to Kyousuke who closely guarded his heart by logically processing everything that happened.
Or maybe he was jealous.
Because for him, fleeing to logic and laying down a defensive line of derisive detachment was the only way he could bring himself to spend time with anyone.
“Is something wrong, brother?”
“No.”
He was unsure if he should call it “lucky”, but he did not run across Aika or Lu Niang Lan after leaving the room.
They must have gotten back to their usual routines once he had woken up. Although that also meant they had been neglecting their jobs until then. The

ordinary kindnesses were found where you could not see them. That was a truth he could not afford to forget.
Dull pain enveloped his neck, side, and the rest of his body too. Crouching down to put on his shoes was a struggle. His body protested far more than he had imagined. When it took him too long, the White Queen reached out a helping hand from the side.
“Here, brother. Let’s start with your right foot.”
“If you help, it doesn’t count as rehab.”
“This helps me grow accustomed to this world.”
After tapping his feet on the floor to check the fit of the shoes, he used the elevator to leave the high-rise apartment.
The White Queen had been right.
He found a scorching world of direct sunlight so hot he thought it would melt the asphalt. Apparently, even this city of artificial things had cicadas on the roadside trees. The deluge of sound nearly deafened him and threw him off balance.
When he staggered, the twintailed girl supported him from the side.
She pouted his lips a little.
“What did I tell you, brother? Should we return to that air-conditioned room?”
“No.” He shook his head, but even that was enough to mess with the equilibrium in his blood-deprived head. “There was something I wanted to think about, but this works even better if you’re coming with me. I want to discuss something with you while we’re out here.”
“?”
The White Queen looked puzzled while they walked through Toy Dream 35 which shimmered in the midsummer heat.
“You should stay in that apartment a while longer.”
“I could return to my cruiser now.”
“The more people around the better if something unexpected happens.”
It was summer break, so there was an endless stream of people even in the hellish heat. Families, couples, groups of tanned boys, and more were walking across all the many bridges. People of all sorts were crowding this one place. The Gozaru Samurai handing out balloons on the roadside could not be having a fun time in this heat. When a small child offered him a chilled drink bottle with a tilt of the head, he froze up and panicked.
There was no conflict here.
If you wanted to fight, you would have to force one to happen.
The long, long battle was finally over.
This was the scene that Shiroyama Kyousuke and the White Queen had won.
It was perfectly ordinary and no one might realize how valuable it was, but the conflict was over.
They had set aside their Blood-Sign and lowered the Sword of Truth.

Those two knew just how much energy that took, so this scene meant so much more to them. A picturesque million-dollar view of the city's night did not matter. This scene roasting below the bright sun was their treasure.
"…"
"Brother?"
The White Queen tilted her head again while holding his arm.
She angled it just like that small child trying to give the costumed mascot a drink.
"Do you mind if I say something that will ruin the mood?" he asked.
"Not if you think it is necessary."
The twintailed girl guided the injured boy into the shade of a roadside tree.
He sighed after leaning against the tree trunk so he was out of the way.
And he resumed speaking with his summoner's face on.
"Have you noticed?"
"That something is not right?"
"The very fact that you're here is out of the ordinary. Since you aren't relying on the 10-minute Artificial Sacred Ground of the Blood-Sign system, I can only guess this is Shigara Masami's doing."
"Yes. I am using the same Box she is. But that means…"
"Shigara Masami has not returned to the other world."
Boxes sounded very convenient since they did not rely on Blood-Signs or Incense Grenades, but there was a reason that method was not more common. The cost of production and operation was far too high.
Shigara Masami would not have been left in this world for no reason.
Which meant…
"She has some reason to keep you here."
Shiroyama Kyousuke had prefaced this discussion by asking if she minded if he said something that would ruin the mood.
"And it wouldn't be for anything as sentimental as letting us have this chat here. She must have some kind of pressing strategic reason to keep a card as powerful as you up her sleeve."
"…"
The twintailed girl said nothing.
This boy would arrive at the answer without her giving it to him.
That was why she had always failed to stop him from getting himself hurt and tormented.
Summoner Shiroyama Kyousuke stared straight ahead as he stated his conclusion.
"There's something more."

Part 3

Her bright pink-dyed hair blew in the salty midsummer breeze.
The waitress demon named Biondetta was on the roof of that same apartment building. And Aika, the owner of the building, was unaware of her presence.
She had moved past the railing.
She sat on the edge of the roof with her long legs dangling off.
“Have you reached your limit?”
She heard a staticky sound.
It was similar to spooked cicadas taking flight from the trees, but not quite the same.
This static was more systematic.
Someone else stood next to Biondetta. It was a ponytailed researcher wearing a tight skirt suit and a lab coat. Gray static surrounded Shigara Masami.
She looked down at the back of her hand and let out a self-deprecating sigh.
<Well, I did only make this abnormal appearance to save Kyousuke-kun. I never thought that Box could keep me in this world indefinitely.>
That was just how much the battle between the White Queen and the Colorless Little Girl had affected their surroundings. Even without a direct attack, the side effects had been enough to blow away the Three, so Shigara Masami could not ignore that damage even if she was simultaneously an excellent summoner and a Divine-class.
Biondetta brushed the hair from her shoulder.
“Shouldn’t you pop in to say goodbye?”
<That would not help anyone. There are other ways for me to deal with my regrets, so don’t you worry.>
However.
Another voice rudely spoke up from the smartphone-connected wireless headphones in the ponytailed researcher’s ears.
The girl’s voice was loud enough to reach Biondetta’s ears while she sat nearby.
“Wait, I went to a lot of trouble making that Box and dumped tons into the energy costs to keep it running, so you can’t just give up like that.”
<Oh, sorry about this, *Azalea-chan*. That wasn’t my intention.>
“We are imprisoned, if you recall. And being given some labor is better than simply being locked up when it comes to staying in shape. I needed some

way of getting exercise, so do not worry about that. More importantly, it sounds like this allowed us to indirectly support the Queen. Thanks to that, The Saint is high on brain chemicals and running around the beach in the nude. What am I even supposed to do about this? We are back to square one on her anti-Queen rehab program."
The mood was ruined, so Biondetta frowned and spoke up.
"I was wondering where you were storing such a largescale Box. So you used that entire Government prison island on the other side of the world?"
<I will admit it has been a while, but I used to lead one of the three major powers. And did I forget to tell you the survivors of the Secret War more or less worship me? So instead of Azalea-chan, my connection here was her brother Claude. A survivor of the Miniature Garden with access to Quad Motors technology was very useful.>
"I shouldn't have been worried."
<Oh, how cute. So all those insults were an act and even Detta-chan was worried for me. You're so adorable☆>
Everyone related to the Fifteen Siblings was surprisingly tough. They kept claiming they were dying without ever actually dying. Shigara Masami was lasting longer than a battery on its last legs.
More importantly.
There was something Shigara Masami wanted to check on before returning to the other world.
<Detta-chan, you were there when we all learned about that small house Kyousuke-kun used to live in, right?>
"You mean that place that was even worse than the Queen's Miniature Garden?"
<That is why I can only ask this of you. Doesn't something about all this seem off? At first glance, it looks like Kyousuke-kun and the Queen reconciled for a happy ending, but it feels like something else is still out there. Something large enough to tear down their temporary happiness if they thoughtlessly dig into it too deep.>
Biondetta and Shigara Masami fell silent there.
They were both afraid to give the answer.
Their mutual fear mixed together.
"But if whatever-this-is is hidden below the surface, we have no way of searching for it."
The waitress demon pulled a phone from her exposed cleavage and checked through the current events around the world.
"At a glance, the biggest topic is Eastern Europe's Kingdom F, but all the news is happy stories about the mysterious cocoon vanishing without a trace. Besides, if there is some villain advancing some plan below the surface, I'm not going to find any sign of it by swiping my finger along this 5-inch LCD screen."
<Oh, that's it.>
"?"

Biondetta had not expected this reaction.
She frowned while Shigara Masami clapped her hands together in front of her large chest.
This was apparently not a joke.
<A search. That’s it. I knew something was bothering me, but we never dealt with that issue!>

Part 4

On that same far-eastern island nation, Kingdom F's Queen Sinceria Highland did not overlook the oddity while on an unofficial visit to Toy Dream 35.
"Phew."
The Poolarium was the fusion of a leisure pool and an aquarium and its selling point was the ability to swim with the dolphins and otters. But at the moment, it had a new star. People viewed Sinceria like a mermaid as she swam through the artificial seawater in a swimsuit.
Her daughter Olivia was lying face up in a mat-shaped rubber boat floating on the water. The pool was several meters deep, so Sinceria wore a life jacket and held a kickboard to swim up to the boat.
"Via, aren't you going to swim?"
"Heh hehn. A proper lady does not cause a scene and splash around the second she sees a pool."
"But the Japanese summer is so hot."
"That's for sure."
Sinceria smiled as she kicked her long legs as if practicing her flutter kicking.
The actions themselves were childish, but they caused her butt and thighs to continually dip above and below the water. Rachel (who was also wearing a swimsuit) was in charge of security and also had to think about the underwater tunnel running below them, so her head was already hurting. She walked along the poolside rooftop while staying close enough to dive in at a moment's notice.
"Did we really have to hold our meeting here?"
"Would you have preferred to use a rental conference room? An office building anyone can use is bound to be full of laser listening devices. Because using one of those places is like announcing that you are about to discuss something lucrative."
They had a good enough reason to blend into the crowd like this.
The small kingdom she ruled had nearly been destroyed. The dome-shaped cocoon made from the White Queen's battle costume had nearly crushed it while continually expanding.
Her worries had vanished once that cocoon had suddenly disappeared and returned to the White Queen, sparing her subjects.
But what had become of the White Queen herself?

What had happened afterwards?
“There have been sightings of the White Queen in Toy Dream 35.” Rachel Wormwood was the kind of straitlaced knight who kept on her glasses even when in a swimsuit, so she gave a formal report while walking alongside the pool at the same pace as Sinceria pushed the rubber boat. “The reports said nothing about her being naked, so the Sword of Truth must have returned to her. She is staying in the top floor of an apartment used as a base for a Government intermediary. That is the same major power as us, so we should be able to request that intermediary disclose what information she has.”
“She’s sure to already be overwhelmed by requests from all over the world. And just like a restaurant that gets a big head after receiving a single star review in a gourmet guide, I doubt she will return our call any sooner than three years from now.”
Truthfully, flutter-kicking Sinceria did not find it all that important to learn the details of that fight’s conclusion.
That apartment was also Shiroyama Kyousuke’s territory.
If the White Queen was staying there now, there had to have been a major change in their relationship. Knowing that was enough.
However.
Not all of her worries were gone.
She was a queen, a woman, and a mother, but this worry was not related to her identity as a queen. And not even she was certain which of the other two identities it was most strongly affecting.
“Let me see that file.”
“Of course.”
Rachel tossed her something from the poolside. It flew like a frisbee and she caught it in one hand. It was a notebook-sized waterproof tablet.
She stopped flutter kicking and placed the tablet on the rubber boat her daughter was riding.
“Honestly, you really can’t underestimate public video sites. Who would expect to find this at the edge of a random video?”
They had not intentionally searched out this data.
It had mostly been a coincidence. It helped a lot that they had searched that city hall database in their search for Shiroyama Kyousuke’s roots. More specifically, it helped that they had checked the ticket request facility in the same building.
Her daughter Olivia Highland tilted her head while lying on the mat-shaped rubber boat.
The girl wore the dark blue one-piece swimsuit born from the hot and humid summers of this country and she held down her straw hat with both hands so it would not fall off.
“Hey, mom?”
“Yes, Via, what is it?”
“What does this mean? Is that who I think it is?”

Sinceria had no answer for her.
But she was glad they had been able to notice this oddity.
They had only done so because they had *seen* this before.
“That which appears in summer to envelop everything.”
Those blonde royals could speak Japanese, but they were still not all that familiar with its culture, so they focused on the meaning before getting to the pronunciation.
“Summer clothing. Natsuginu.”

Part 5

It was late at night.
Kyousuke had escaped the penalty for losing and his injuries were being healed by the White Queen’s tourniquets, but he was still making an effort to get plenty of rest. He could have returned to his cruiser, but he had been forced to stay in Aika’s apartment because the others claimed the rocking boat would be bad for his health. (Whether they had an ulterior motive for keeping him here was unknown.)
And while he tried to sleep…

“Long time no see.”
He heard a voice.
It came from the balcony. The lights were off, so the moonlight illuminated the visitor. But this was the top floor of a high-rise apartment and there had been no sign of someone arriving on the roof by helicopter or tiltrotor.
Then how had this girl arrived on the balcony?
She stood there so naturally it felt wrong to even ask that question.
Kyousuke sat up in bed and frowned a little.
“Umie…Shouko?”
“You can call me the Rainy Girl if you like. That name is more familiar to you, isn’t it?”
Shiroyama Kyousuke had gone as far as *correcting history* to forcibly save her. His librarian classmate’s older sister had been killed in a random attack and the incident had held such a lasting effect that it transformed into a ghost story…except all of that should have gone away once Umie Shouko’s death had been avoided.
He could only think of one explanation.
“You still have your memories? No, this isn’t just Timeline A or Timeline B. Did you diverge from the actual branch point in history?”
“It is not over yet.”
This was sudden.
No, if they continued this conversation in the ordinary way, they would never get away from discussing that divergent side of her existence. That may have been why she decided to jump straight to the topic at hand.
“Someone *on the outside* like me has begun to move. I am sensitive to such things because I exist in a similar fashion. How you respond is up to you, but I really think you should get ready.”
“?”
“This person has a connection to you, Shiroyama-san.”
She seemed to be jumping all over the place as she talked.
It may have been similar to someone doing a bad job of explaining the plot of the movie they had just finished watching.
Prophecies and oracles had their pros and cons. In addition to the accuracy of the original information, the speaker and the listener also had to be accurate. In that sense, Umie Shouko really was an ordinary person. She had talent, but she had not trained as a shrine maiden. She had gotten wrapped up in the Rainy Girl incident by random chance, so she had trouble passing on the message in this game of telephone.
“The world you live in is also the one my sister lives in, so please do not let anything happen that would make her sad. As long as you give me that, I do not care what happens to the world. And either way, you alone are in the position to change fate here.”
“What?”
Finally, a chill caught up to him. It was like the icy fingers of death crawling along his spine.

“I’m not going to confront the White Queen again, so what else could there be?”
“You will know soon enough.”
She did not say much, but her words had to contain more information than an entire library.
He had suspected there was something else, but what exactly was it?
“Remember your past. There is still an unresolved source of tragedy, isn’t there?”
That was all.
Her voice vanished. As did her presence.,
Shiroyama Kyousuke got out of bed and walked across the floor to the balcony beyond the fluttering curtain.
But there was no one there.
This was the top floor of a high-rise apartment.
Just like when she had arrived, he could not even guess how Umie Shouko – the Rainy Girl – had left.

Part 6

“What is all this racket?”
That question came from Sekurtiti, a brown-skinned girl with shoulder-length silver hair. She worked as a Tomb Priestess for a group with its origins in Egyptian mythology, so the only things covering her bright skin were white bandages, pure gold, and red gems.
She was being guided through the apartment by Aika, a girl in a green and white striped bikini. They were both showing a lot of skin, but not because it was summer. They were like this 365 days a year.
“Onii-chan probably did something again. Apparently, he’s preparing to abandon his shut-in bikini little sister so he can go to the pool. It really is a frightening thought. The battle for little sister superiority has been entirely overturned by that silver twintails girl.”
“By ‘Onii-chan’, do you mean Shiroyama Kyousuke?”
Sekurtiti only tilted her head further, but she was here for work.
Aika only lived in the top floor of this apartment building and the other seemingly-ordinary floors hid a crucial facility known as the Founder’s Gallery. That stored some of the fairy tale materials that the Toy Dream Company had used as a foundation for their massively successful global entertainment business. It specifically held the old documents and antiques gathered from around the world that *held a value that normal people would never even notice*.
Sekurtiti was here to check on something for her job.
“You said you were closing the gallery, didn’t you?”
“All it does here is bind me. And then grandpa helped make that Blue Film meant to harm Eastern Europe’s Kingdom F. I thought now was a good time for it.”
The World’s Happiest Girl.
A certain granddaughter should have been the main character of a fairy tale told until the end of time.
But after unknowingly earning some Awards as a summoner, the entire world had forgotten her and she had forever lost that position.
Another voice rudely interrupted those two’s solemn mood.
“Hold on. Are you saying you called us to this hot-as-hell far eastern country just to help you move?”
It was a girl even shorter than Aika and with skin brown from tanning unlike Sekurtiti’s natural brown. She had piercings in her ears, tongue,

navel, and more unspeakable places as a sort of penance rather than fashion. She wore a witch hat and glasses and she dragged around a special weapon that looked like a giant hatchet or smoking pipe.
She was Incense Expert Ellie Slide.
She was accompanied by Max Layard, a large summoner with a pompadour.
Aika shrugged.
“Your job is to transport this stuff to the deepest part of a museum in Washington DC. The researcher named Maria Heartocean should be able to put my grandpa’s treasures to the best use. And don’t complain when you’ve already taken half the payment up front, subcontractors. You will get the rest of your money after the job is complete.”
“You act like some kind of tragic heroine, but you still think like a gazillionaire deep down. I don’t like it.”
Ellie Slide continued grumbling while they unlocked one of the ordinary doors lining the hallway and stepped inside.
It was packed full of blessings and curses.
Ignorance was a frightening thing. No one with any proper knowledge of the occult would have been able to gather all this without having nightmares.
Ellie Slide looked annoyed.
“We have to transport all of this?”
“Please make sure none of it is stolen en route. Your job is not complete until it has been delivered.”
“I shouldn’t have let Max do the talking just because I hate doing it so much. He totally botched the negotiations this time. This is a secret job for the world-famous Toy Dream Company and the going rate for delivery jobs is 1% the value of the cargo. We should be getting paid 15 times what we’re getting…”
But it was too late to complain now.
The up-front payment was not just a kindness. The payer used it to restrict the payee’s freedom.
Sekurtiti placed a hand on a too-skinny hip and softly sighed through her shapely nose.
“I will supervise the work as a member of the tomb keepers. What your company did to Eastern Europe’s Kingdom F was inexcusable, but it did not entirely negate the debt we owe you for preserving the pharaoh’s tomb and ruins we have protected for generations.”
“So you’re gonna be looking over our shoulders without even helping!? Look at how much there is and how powerful it all is!? Packing it all up with curse seals and physical cushioning is going to use up an entire day!!”
Ellie Slide had tears behind her glasses as she shouted in despair, but the brown Tomb Priestess kept a composed expression. She had not taken any money, so she did not need to obey Aika’s instructions.
Meanwhile, the striped bikini girl was arrogant.

“By the way, I hired you to do the work, so I will not be helping. Work hard, you movers.”
“This is the worst… I can’t think of any response other than kicking Max.”
“We can eat lunch once you’re done packing up. I’m as ravenous as my liger today, so let’s have some buffalo steaks.”
“Yay!”
And so they began reorganizing the Founder’s Gallery. Everything there was a valuable treasure, so even a single ring would fetch hundreds of millions at auction. They first constructed some large cardboard boxes and shoved smaller duralumin cargo boxes inside those. Just like with armored trucks carrying cash, an appearance of strict security was like painting a target on yourself. It was important to make things look cheap and unimportant.
While decorating the interior with ordinary packing material and a wide tape woven with a long talisman text, Ellie Slide spoke up.
“Listen, we will be taking this by the ordinary air route. After stuffing all the boxes in the cargo room of an ordinary airline used by movers, we will take some business class seats as ordinary customers. Even if the plane crashes, the boxes are waterproofed enough to float in the ocean for 18 hours. Now the emergency recovery beacon will-…”
“Wow, I remember this. This is grandpa’s notebook of ideas.”
“Are you the kind of person who ends up reading old manga when trying to clean your room? Do I need to fill the Government local network with one-star reviews about how awful the intermediary here is!?”
A paper sticker was attached to the notebook’s cover and it had something handwritten on it:
“Restrain your hatred for now (qe – i – md – ei – wbjrb). That is the standard (ii – i – jd). Fill this age with new ideas (hi – wz – ei – lm – ou – yh – ml).”
(Oh, grandpa.)
This brought back so many old memories.
That man had founded the Toy Dream Company which had brought dreams to children around the world. But he had not simply pulled out presents with a constant smile like Santa Claus. This contained the rawer side of him as a writer and as a human. There would have been nights when he struggled all alone while tearing at his hair, fearing he was out of ideas, and holding a pen in hand and finding nothing to write.
These were the claw marks he could not let anyone see.
He had not realized that series of letters could possibly summon a real god, but he had created more smiles than any summoner or vessel in the world.
“Hm, hm.”
Aika sat down and flipped through the notebook, but then she came to a stop.
She ran her slender finger along some hastily jotted down text that was written in the alphabet but was not English.

Sekurtiti also seemed interested as someone who had seen that old man from a perspective other than as a granddaughter. She peered over Aika's shoulder.
"What is it?"
"Mhh."
Aika did not understand everything that was written there:
"It is simply not possible in this world (weq – go – i – pms – kd)."
"Call her (kq – ei – rg)."
That was what a direct interpretation of the messy writing said, but was that really accurate? It was not uncommon for people to jot down a memo before an idea vanished from their mind and for no one but them to understand what that memo meant. It was also possible these were ideas for story titles or song lyrics.
But…
"…"
The next thing she knew, the swimsuit granddaughter was silently reading.
The founder's talent was real. A lot had happened along the way, but he had built the Toy Dream Company up to a multinational corporation in a single generation. There were things only he could understand. The fairy tales loved by people around the world were the result of him taking the undiluted original content and watering it down to the point that it was palatable for everyone.
But even this girl could read the emotions contained in this writing, like the needle following the record's groove.
This had been jotted down so quickly it was barely legible.
There was a lot of agony and confusion there. Those emotions were so thick it reached a dangerous level.
The accompanying sketch appeared to be a girl. Her white or silver hair was tied into twintails at a point below her head. She did not appear to be wearing any actual clothing. She instead had strange objects like junk and cables wrapped around her body. But that white figure was all drawn in the style of a children's picture book and it was only an incomplete rough, so it all looked more eerie than provocative. It made one want to run away, like seeing a French doll with all its clothing removed.
So.
Aika had no idea what about this had caught her attention, but she read one particular word out loud.
Had her grandfather been unable to find the corresponding letters in the old texts he was referencing?
For whatever reason, this word alone was written in ordinary language.
"Wisdom?"

Part 7

The White Queen had been the one to suggest they go somewhere summery.
Had the constant focus on battle been suffocating her?
Or had she wanted to rid herself of as many regrets as she could before heading to death?
“But I’m full of holes. My blood will start spilling out the second I’m in the water!!”
“The tourniquets should have closed up your wounds by now and you need rehab, don’t you? This is a good test☆”
As their conversation suggested, the Queen had changed into a swimsuit.
They had chosen a pool as a compromise because salty seawater sounded like a very bad idea for his wounds, but now a different warning signal was going off in Kyousuke’s head.
“Well, if you insist, brother, I suppose I can meet your selfish demands. Oh, my, my. Look at this lovely pool here, brother. They are opening the school pool to the public. Hee hee. It might be nice to see what swimming classes are like.”
“You set me up!? I just know you spent all night researching this so you could trick me into it!”
“Whatever are you talking about? Now, brother, can you take my hand? It is time to go.”
The smiling White Queen claimed to be supporting his body, but she was mostly dragging him along as they left the high-rise apartment.
The fact that Kyousuke was making such a fuss may have been proof he was recovering and feeling less pain.
The school was a busy place even though this was summer break
And not just because of club activities.
The pool was open, so a lot of nearby residents were there.
“Ugh…”
“Brother, we are already here, so you might as well try to enjoy yourself.”
This was the amusement park city of Toy Dream 35. It was scary how everyone just accepted her battle costume as no more than “flashier than a yukata”. The girl’s tennis team was trying to show off by wearing their full tennis uniforms even on a practice day, so they ended up grinding their teeth. The Queen herself kept a composed expression as she gathered all the attention.

She made her way to the school building and looked to one of the few empty classrooms designated as a girl's locker room.
"Okay, brother, I hate to be away from you for even a moment, but we have no choice here."
"Yes, yes."
"You are injured, so just let me know if you ever need any hands-on rehab assistance☆"
"Yes, I get it. You'll kill me if I run away."
He shooed her away like a dog and walked to the empty classroom for the boys.
He kicked the door open while holding the waterproof bag carrying his swimsuit and found someone already changing inside. Rendou Akiya had just put on a lovely swimsuit and was pulling his chestnut hair back with a hair tie in his mouth.
The orchestral band and the pop band must have been competing in some way because Kyousuke could hear their loud music playing in the distance.
"Oh, right. You don't use the girl's locker room, do you?"
"Hwa hwa hwah hwa hwa hwan."
"Take that hair tie out of your mouth."
Kyousuke could have read his lips, but revealing that skill would only confuse the boy.
His classmate tied back his hair with the tie before speaking.
"I only do this as a fashion statement, so why would I use the girl's locker room? That sounds like a harrowing experience, if you ask me. I accidentally boarded the women-only car the other day and that was very bad for my heart."
"Sigh."
That said, Rendou Akiya was so "perfect" that having to change in the same room as him felt like being handcuffed. There were a lot of ordinary guests here, so this explained why no one else was using this particular locker room. However, making too much of an issue out of it would only put this belligerent classmate in a bad mood.
"By the way, how'd you hurt yourself so bad? What happened? Did you try to learn how to ride a motorcycle during summer break and have it fall over in the middle of a ride?"
"I got in a bit of a fight with my 'little sister'."
"Yikes. That sounds way more dangerous than a 250cc big scooter. My condolences. I swear nothing brings trouble like a little sister. Why anyone wants to have one of those when they can have an older girl is beyond me. These days, everyone wants to be surrounded by kindness. I mean, we're all too overwhelmed by life to deal with supporting someone else."
That seemed to be Rendou Akiya's philosophy, which explained why he had heaped praise on Student Council President Benikomichi Fuuki in the other timeline.
The two boys walked barefoot down the hall.

“So, Shiroyama-chan, did you know Librarian has an older sister?”
“Oh, you mean Umie Shouko?”
“Eh? You already know her full name? Wait, why have you researched her so much? I went to middle school with Librarian and I only recently learned about this. Are you seriously aiming for that sexy upperclassman!?”
Rendou Akiya suddenly grew tearful and emotionally unstable, so he was definitely into older girls. Kyousuke was kind of impressed by how the boy did not hide anything from his friends. …And the boy had nothing to worry about. The Rainy Girl could manipulate the paranormal all on her own without spelling anything out with letters, so in a way, she outdid even Tomb Priestess Sekurtiti. Her power could be seen as a form of cheating different from the White Queen’s, so Kyousuke could only praise his friend’s courage for going after someone like that.
After following the passageway to the outdoor pool, a chlorine disinfectant smell stung their noses.
Librarian-chan, who wore glasses and kept her hair in a braid, must have only just arrived. Her school swimsuit somehow did not help her stand out from the crowd. She stood on the poolside with her legs spread apart and her hands on her hips while she wiggled her body around in some warmup exercises.
“Morning, you two. I hope you’re enjoying a lazy summer while I’m stuck here for work again.”
“Morning, Umie Whatever.”
“Hello, Shouko-san’s sister.”
“Um, I am super worried by how you seem to be defining me based on my sister, but please don’t tell me some summer event has greatly complicated the interpersonal relationships around me. My family isn’t going to be hit by some strange storm, is it!? Is it!?”
Librarian-chan approached them so forcefully she would likely make a good member of the public morals committee, but she had nothing to worry about. Kyousuke felt like successfully confessing to the Rainy Girl would be harder than seducing the Red Lady of the Three.
(Although I guess I tried something just as crazy.)
The heat of the tiles must have been too much for her bare feet because Librarian-chan began hopping back and forth as she asked another question.
“And Shiroyama-kun, what’s with those bandages? Did you visit the mountains and fight a bear???”
“I got in a bit of a scuffle with my ‘little sister’. I regret nothing.”
“I-I refuse to accept the common theory that little sisters are nothing but trouble!! In my family, it’s always my older sister that brings chaos with her!!”
Librarian-chan began freaking out again, but she seemed to be enjoying her summer.
That was when Kyousuke heard some quiet footsteps.

It was still morning and the water was still cold, but there were a lot of people here.
Nevertheless, this chilly noise was not drowned out by the crowd. It reminded him of water dripping from stalactites in a blue glowing cave.

“Sorry about the wait, brother.”
A silver-twintailed girl awkwardly stood there holding an extra-large sports towel. She was wearing the same style of school swimsuit as Librarian-chan, but her overall aura was different. White. It was white. Kyousuke was surprised to find that swimsuit actually existed.
Rendou Akiya stared in shock.
“A white school swimsuit? Are you serious!? That legendary item is too much even for me, yet she’s pulling it off perfectly! Who is she!?”
“If that is made to be see-through when wet, I am blowing this whistle. And why did you call him ‘brother’?”
…Kyousuke recalled that Librarian-chan did not remember anything of the Rainy Girl incident since it had been resolved by altering history. This was confusing. Although if she did remember all that, she might have done a spit take and collapsed backwards here.
He decided to give a simple explanation before this got to be too much trouble.
“This is my little sister who is my little sister but also not my little sister. I also have a little sister who is my real little sister.”
“Oh, god!! This is definitely trouble!!”
Rendou Akiya held his head in his hands.
An amateur opinion could sometimes be surprisingly accurate.

Part 8

The twintailed White Queen had gone to the trouble of visiting the school pool, but she did not jump in the water or chase after the beach ball. She only sat on the edge of the chlorine-smelling pool and kicked her feet to splash the water.
She opened a rental book contained in a clear waterproof bag, but she seemed more entertained by watching Kyousuke play with his classmates. According to her…
“Um, matching my actions to human standards is quite difficult. And the underwater calculations are especially difficult. You do not want me to start walking on the water or accidentally part the ocean, do you?”
Not sneaking up behind her and pushing her in was the right decision.
They also ended up eating lunch at the school.
The cafeteria had been opened up to sell some seaside restaurant snacks like yakisoba, chilled noodles, grilled chicken, ramen, curry rice, pancakes, fried rice, and shaved ice. This was of course just a repurposing of the cultural festival menu.
“Mind if I join you?”
The Student Council President sat across from Kyousuke at the long table and she too was wearing a school swimsuit. Her long black hair and dark blue swimsuit were both soaking wet and the floor below the table was quickly covered with chlorine-smelling drops.
Her name was Benikomichi Fuuki.
“Who is this person with you? A foreigner? I hate to brag, but it is unusual for someone to outshine me. Damn, I thought going with the school designated version during the summer would be interesting enough, but I never expected someone to get a white one.”
The White Queen tilted her head, but Kyousuke held out a hand to stop her. Their memories of the incident involving this girl made these situations tricky. At the very least, *the current* Benikomichi Fuuki was not an Illegal vessel and she was not fighting Kyousuke over a deathless world. And since she was hanging around in a swimsuit like this, checking her back would probably not reveal tattoos that functioned as psychological bonds.
The beautiful Student Council President did not seem to notice Kyousuke and the White Queen’s exchanged glance.
“There are an awful lot of people here today. It seems the kids from some other school are here for a field trip to appreciate nature.”

“Nature? In this concrete city?”
“Some areas among all the bridges are considered nature parks. Yesterday, they apparently went to a 100% artificial forest to cook in the great outdoors and sleep in a tent with mosquitos biting them throughout. All while they could see the light of a convenience store not far away. Thanks to that, they are starving for some junk food. It was quite a scene when they viewed the fries and sodas with tears in their eyes.”
The other schools apparently had their own issues.
And that entire event reeked of having been planned entirely by the teachers.
For one thing, it was unlikely a student would schedule any kind of school event during summer break.
The Student Council President brushed the wet hair from her ear while giving off the chlorine scent of the school pool and ate a mysterious experimental dish made by combining cold udon, a salad, and some sweet vinegar dressing.
“Also, why is that girl eating only the whites of those fried eggs? If you were being picky, wouldn’t you normally focus your attack on the yolks!?”
“Queen.”
“I am a body builder, so I only eat egg whites, white chicken tenders, and drinks made from white protein powder.”
“I’m fine with you being a picky eater, but don’t lie about it.”
When the White Queen said all that with a straight face, he pinched both her cheeks to punish her. It was a small thing, but he did not like how she started falling back into old habits once things settled down.
“Hut I heally hoo heat honly hite hings…”
With her base durability, the punishment had little effect. In fact, the white swimsuit girl looked a little happy about it.
“We must not waste food,” she said once released. “So we can solve all of this by having you eat what I leave behind, brother.”
“…Are you serious?”
“Here, you can have this garlic liver. Oh, and all the eel that didn’t come out white. And let’s not forget these bite-sized pork cutlets.”
She mercilessly began loading up his plate until it was piled high.
“By the way.” She was smiling. “Just one of these is something I cooked myself using a portable stove☆ Now, brother. You know everything about me, so surely you can figure out which it is.”
“A deadly quiz out of the blue, huh? I get the feeling you haven’t really changed at all!”
“Oh, and looking for something white is not going to work. I bit my lip and endured the pain this time.”
Nothing was more annoying than a lover who decided to test your love every once in a while.
Did she not understand that simple fact that was known the world over!?
Meanwhile, Benikomichi Fuuki rudely placed her head in her hand.

The beautiful Student Council President frowned while resting her wet swimsuit boobs on the table.
“Hmm, I seriously doubt the school budget is enough for natural eel. Either there’s some strange supply logic at play like with the gyudon shops fighting for supremacy in the dog days of summer, or some kind of deep sea fish is being used as a replacement.”
“Then it must be that!! Where did that eel come from!?”
“Tch. I shouldn’t have left room for another girl to help you out. But regardless, say ‘ah’, brother. I will feed you the eel as a reward for getting it right.”
The only difference between white eel and amber-colored eel was whether it had a sweet sauce on it or not. The White Queen must have cooked it and then given it the (from her perspective) unnecessary coloring sauce while cooking it some more.
Kyousuke looked on the verge of tears, but he was gradually figuring out what the White Queen was trying to do here. He was looking fairly weak due to his injuries, so she was trying to feed him highly nutritious foods that would help him produce more blood.
(I was wondering what she was reading so intently there on the poolside, but it must have been a cookbook.)
“Hee hee hee. Get better soon, brother.”
“Honestly…”
If she really wanted to do this, it would have been easier to prepare him some cereal with iron-fortified milk, but he had no intention of getting into an argument here.
But.
Then he heard a clattering sound from a seat a short distance away.
And when he looked over…
“I am super-sized afraid to speculate what she is hoping to accomplish by feeding him nothing but stamina-building foods while wearing a wet and see-through white swimsuit. Shiver (deadpan).”
“No, Sayuri! We should leave them be. That white swimsuit alone is taking things too far, but when you also take all those stamina foods into consideration, it’s pretty obvious they have some rather adult plans for this summer night!!”
There were indeed some students from another school here for a field trip.
And thanks to that, Shiroyama Kyousuke had to hold his head in hands with a dark look on his face.

Part 9

They may have only been the tip of the iceberg, but there had been signs and premonitions visible here and there.
And now someone had stumbled upon the correct answer by pure coincidence instead of by following all the hints and gathering all the relevant information.
…If this were a murder mystery novel, they likely would have ended up as the second or third victim who was killed in an irregular fashion after learning too much.
“R-Renge?”
“…”
They wore bright white and red shrine maiden outfits.
And they themselves were identical twins.
Except that is, for the black hair and black eyes of the one and the blonde hair and blue eyes of the other.
They were Meinokawa Renge and Higan.
They too were qualified for this role because they knew the truth of the Shiroyama family. Although they had acquired the information through a unique route: speaking directly with Doctor S while he was imprisoned on South America’s Devil’s Island.
Of course, a simple conversation did not give them all the information they might have wanted.
They were on a large bridge crowded with people.
The twin shrine maidens were in Toy Dream 35 to get more accurate information out of Kyousuke himself even if it was hard on him.
…But the truth was, Doctor S had broken the strict rules of his prison. He needed an oxygen mask at all times for medical reasons, so he always had a small tank in a bag he wheeled around with him and he had hidden a few personal items in there.
For example, some documents and photographs that corroborated the truth about the past.
But instead of trying to preserve his memories of his wife and kids in that nightmarish small home, he may have been more interested in the large price tag he hoped to attach to the information on Shiroyama Kyousuke and the White Queen’s origins.
However.
That was why blonde Higan had grown pale now.

She had seen something on the crowded bridge that should not have been there.
It was nowhere near as exciting as an oddly-dressed summoner or vessel and nowhere near as strange as an otherworldly Material. Nor was it a bloody warrior or skeleton. In fact, no one but those twins realized anything was amiss as they enjoyed their summer break despite the sweltering heat. The twins themselves may have stood out more due to their shrine maiden outfits.
But thanks to their experience on a different stage, Meinokawa Renge and Higan could tell quite clearly that a true oddity was mixed in with the crowd of people. And this could not be explained away using theatre costumes or special makeup.
They sensed a sickly sweet smell similar to a fruit just as it started to rot. This was a dangerous presence that lured others toward death along with it.
“I-i-isn’t that-? But it can’t be!!”
“Wait, Higan. Let’s look at this rationally. It could just be someone who looks a lot like her.”
This was someone intimately connected to Shiroyama Kyousuke’s past.
Yet it *was not* the Colorless Little Girl who had been created using his younger sister’s soul.
The extreme oddity standing before them was someone else.
“That person…Natsuginu-san, was it? She seems to have talent as a vessel just like my sister.”
Higan cried out in surprise.
When a summoner or vessel had earned a certain number of Awards, normal people would forget all about them. Yet this girl had spoken to them without issue. That suggested she was an expert in the world of summoning, but something about her seemed different.
A summoner would be carrying a Blood-Sign and a vessel would be wearing some kind of psychological bond so evil spirits and monsters would not take control of their mind.
Yet this high school girl had nothing of the sort.
She was an ordinary person, yet she could properly perceive summoners and vessels.
The short-haired girl wore the wine-red miniskirt and short-sleeved blouse of some school’s summer uniform and she existed outside the Blood-Sign rules.
She glanced over at Higan.
“I wonder if being a younger sister is an important factor there. You are a vessel too, aren’t you?”
“U-u-um, who are you?”
“My real name is so boring I doubt you would remember it. Even my sister is still called Librarian-chan by her friends, after all. So I think I will name myself as the Rainy Girl.”

She seemed like a perfectly ordinary girl, but she had seemingly appeared out of nowhere and kept a casual tone as she spoke.
“More importantly,” she added. “You aren’t wrong about this. That person *is probably the same as me.*”
“The same how?”
The girl laughed at black-haired Renge’s question.
“She has died, but certain circumstances erased that death.”
“?”
“You don’t need to understand. But you know that person over there should be dead, don’t you?”
Yes.
That was right.
Whoever this girl talking to them was and whoever that person in the crowd was, it could not overturn the information Renge and Higan had acquired. It made no sense for that person to be alive. And they doubted this was anything as boring as decoy information at this point. They had to assume that reality had been forcibly altered by some great force.
So.
Who was this person that Renge and Higan had spotted by chance?
“Shiroyama-san’s…mom?”
That was exactly it.
Doctor S had created that nightmare stage and it had been bloodied by the White Queen’s appearance. When that happened, Kyousuke’s mother and little sister had been killed.
Anyone directly killed by the White Queen could not be saved even by traveling back in time or to parallel worlds.
That was an inviolable rule.
…But you must not forget. The Queen had killed Kyousuke’s little sister, but what about his mother?
Hadn’t she been shot to death by her husband, Doctor S, before all that happened?
And.
If the White Queen had not done it, then there was a way to save a supposedly dead person by altering history. The Rainy Girl’s very presence here was proof of that.
“Hurry to Shiroyama Kyousuke.” That was all she said at first. “However it was done, there must be someone more powerful behind the unnatural resurrection of a supposedly dead person. That means there is something here with a connection to Shiroyama-san’s roots that wants a special vessel. …And at this point, it can’t be the White Queen. Who is that wandering out there? And whoever is behind this, it is obvious who it is they want to control: the Colorless Little Girl.”
Like a midsummer mirage, the Rainy Girl was already gone by the time Renge and Higan tried to ask more.
“Ah.”

And.
The other ghost, Kyousuke’s mother, had also disappeared without a trace.

Part 10

With that, they had all the information.

Part 11

They were in Aika's mansion.
Shiroyama Kyousuke was back to his normal self as he stepped out of one of the many guest rooms.
While borrowing the White Queen's shoulder.
Several familiar girls were waiting for him in the living room: Aika, Lu Niang Lan, Meinokawa Renge and Higan, Joruri Method Aoi, Shigara Masami, Isabelle, Murasame Kuina, Biondetta, Himekawa Mika, Sekurtiti, Sinceria, Rachel, and Olivia. These were all bonds Kyousuke had risked his life to build. Vessels without a contract were the same as normal people, so the memory and recognition issues must have made it difficult to summon some of them here. The summoners must have put in a lot of work while he was recovering.
The boy looked around and immediately got to the crux of the matter while sitting down on the sofa.
"Wisdom."
That term alone did not mean much of anything.
But anyone who had seen his past would find special meaning there.
"The White Queen once asked a certain question while watching me and my sister in the fight to the death Doctor S demanded of us. She asked 'what is that?'"
A predecessor, one who shows the way, one you can rely upon, the master of an apprentice.
In other words, a being known as an older brother.
"You could say that is where it all began."
This was a criticism.
A criticism only possible for someone who had overcome that hell.
"It was that answer to the Queen's question that led her to view me as something special. And I think that is why she tried to protect me even if it meant killing my sister. *But who was that*? The Queen had never been summoned to this world before then. That means there was someone else in that world that could speak like a human and provide opinions on a level equal to or greater than the Queen. All of this might have been set up by them. They might have intentionally sent the Queen on a rampage so she would kill my sister and destroy any chance of us ever getting along."
Wisdom.
A search.

…Thinking back, when the White Queen had first come to Toy Dream 35 in response to Azalea Magentarain and Guard of Honor's summons, she had said she called him brother not because of a blood relation but because she had performed a search and that was the most fitting term.
That meant there was some other being who *the* White Queen relied on for knowledge.
For Kyousuke and anyone else who still lived in this world, they could only ever speculate about things in that other world, so asking someone who actually lived there was their best bet.
Everyone's eyes focused on the White Queen.
The twintailed girl tilted her head while standing next to Kyousuke instead of sitting on the sofa.
"This Wisdom you are referring to is a special Unexplored-class."
She readily supplied the information.
In fact, it was such an ordinary fact of life for her that she probably never even considered hiding it. She seemed surprised to learn that the others were only just now realizing this being existed.
"Her technical name is…um, it is actually impossible to represent it using the alphabet."
"What do you mean it's impossible?" asked Olivia who had pulled out a kiddie pool even though they were indoors.
The White Queen winked and raised her index finger.
"It is a non-looping pattern similar to pi, so it just continues on and on forever. A few of the cults I have visited speculated her existence and worked on analyzing her name, but none of them have ever made it past 1,287,993,006 letters. Then again, that entire endeavor is probably meaningless."
"If letters can't spell her name, is this a Material no one has ever summoned?"
Names were everything in the Blood-Sign system.
If their name could not be represented with the 5 vowels and 21 consonants, they could not be summoned to this world.
"Yes, but that has no bearing on her strength."
"I get that. I'm not about to accept that there's someone even more overpowered than you or the Colorless Little Girl out there."
In fact, if some convenient being like that existed, Kyousuke would not have needed to rely on the Colorless Little Girl at all. The Queen stood at the top of the pyramid and the Colorless Little Girl was the specialized killer who did not exist in the natural world.
"She definitely exists, but she cannot be summoned with the Blood-Sign system since she has no name. That makes her an Unexplored-class with no place except for the other world. She has no power in combat, but she instead constantly absorbs all forms of knowledge in real-time. Yes, if you think of me as the omnipotent one, then she would be the omniscient one. She is the yin to my yang and the left to my right. When one of us exists, the

other is defined into existence as well and we remain together whether we try to or not.”
“So after all this, it turns out she has an ex-girlfriend?”
“Oh, dear. Is this a new rival for Kyousuke-chan? And since all of the Unexplored-classes are girls, am I right in imagining a strong lily scent coming from this?”
“Everyone always talks about lilies, but do you really know what they smell like?”
“Of course I do. I went to a girl’s school.”
“I meant the literal flower. Where were you sticking your head and what were you smelling, flower chafer woman?”
The striped bikini girl and modified China dress beauty used the white liger as a sofa while discussing something on their own.
“Mhh (deadpan). I don’t get what they’re talking about one small-sized bit.”
“Sayuri, try to ignore them.”
Blonde Isabelle tilted her head, but Murasame Kuina’s face blushed bright red below her shoulder-length chestnut hair and she was clearly shaken. She must have known what that discussion was really about.
“They’re talking about love and romance between girls! There must be an unimaginable world out there!! Don’t look, Sayuri, I’m not ready yet!”
The White Queen sighed.
It was not uncommon for the one giving the warning to have the more active imagination.
“If you want to insist that using a search engine makes it your girlfriend, then be my guest.”
“Oh? Going with the dry response? How boring.”
“What am I supposed to say when you point at the AI speaker hooked up to the network and claim it must be my girlfriend because I let it live in my house? Do you draw eyes and a mouth on yours to help anthropomorphize it?”
“But we are talking about an Unexplored-class here, aren’t we?” cautiously asked Himekawa Mika who was sitting on the glass table instead of the sofa.
“Yes, although she is the weakest of us all when it comes to combat,” said the White Queen. “I viewed the world through her until I met brother. Because it was a lot easier than heading out and taking a look for myself.”
It could not hurt to ask as many questions as they could.
Aika tilted her head while leaning back against the white liger.
“Hm? But shouldn’t an Unexplored-class be associated with a color?”
“Usually, yes, but she is omniscience while I am omnipotence. All of those *colorations* came from breaking down my white coloration as if by a prism, so it has nothing to do with the omniscience that exists in another category altogether.”
“Um, you called it ‘searching’, but does it work like with an internet browser or an AI speaker?”

Renge hesitantly spoke up while directly sitting on the floor because she was a traditional Japanese-style person. Her examples were awfully digital for a shrine maiden, but that may have been because the insufficient infrastructure of rural villages led people to rely more on online shopping and flat-fee video streaming sites that were uniform across the country.
The other shrine maiden, Higan, was still hiding behind her twin's back. Her fear of the Queen was not going to disappear overnight.
The White Queen put a hand on her hip and answered.
"It may be more like a translation or interpretation."
"Interpretation?"
Brown-skinned and bandaged Sekurtiti frowned while standing and leaning back against a cupboard with a glass door.
The twintailed girl nodded.
"Wisdom is a being who gathers all words. When speaking with another Unexplored-class, it is easier to have Wisdom provide a translation of what they mean than to try to read the emotions from their face."
Kyousuke felt like he was figuring something out here.
Even if the White Queen had been in contact with one million Unexplored-classes, she would only have really been speaking with Wisdom.
Like a mother bird flying around in the dangerous outside world to bring food back to the baby bird in the safe nest.
And there was more information that bothered Kyousuke.
"When I lost, the Colorless Little Girl would have left Aoi and returned to the other world, right?" he said. "And now Sinceria, Olivia, Renge, and Higan have seen Shiroyama Natsuginu. In other words, my mom who should be dead. It is highly suspicious that she came back from the dead without warning like this. It's a little worrying that we only have the Rainy Girl as a source, but it seems she has talent as a vessel."
What if Kyousuke's mother really did have excellent talent as a vessel?
Wouldn't that change the meaning of what happened in the past?
Doctor S had maintained control of that small house by controlling the supply of insect vessels using silkworms, which had been worshiped as a beneficial bug. No matter how powerful Kyousuke and his sister were as summoners, they could not rebel against him when he controlled all the vessels.
But what if their mother had been a vessel capable of fighting?
If she had escaped Doctor S's bonds and helped out those young children, that tragedy might never have occurred, they might have easily defeated their father, and the story might have ended with the good rewarded and the evil punished. And in fact, Kyousuke's mother and sister had secretly protected him during all that abuse. They had retrieved the treasures Doctor S had thrown out as unnecessary and hid them above the ceiling.
So.
When Doctor S started that incident by shooting his own wife, it was not because he thought nothing of her. He had feared her from the bottom of

his heart. In that final stage, he was pitting Kyousuke and his sister against each other in a fight to the death, but he would have been destroyed had that woman chosen to act as a mother more than a wife and had protected her young children.
(He feared his wife and his children. He made sure he looked like a researcher who had it all, but he was such a pitiful man.)
Doctor S had only been reaping what he sowed, but Kyousuke could only feel pity.
He felt no anger when thinking back on that tragic past.
He had always thought a lack of desire for revenge was only found in dramas and movies written by people who disliked killing, but here he had found someone so utterly hopeless *that he could not even work up those negative emotions about him*.
There was no point in discussing a man as small as Doctor S any longer. What mattered was Kyousuke's mother, the vessel whose very presence had filled that man's heart with fear.
"Like with the Rainy Girl, it is possible to use the logic of the Summoning Ceremony to resurrect the dead. It requires a singularity on the level of the White Queen, but it is possible."
Resurrecting the dead.
That was one of the oldest topics of discussion and it was just like Shiroyama Kyousuke to not simply write it off as impossible. And this was not just a theory for him; he had actually pulled it off with the Rainy Girl.
"You said Wisdom is a word specialist, right?" he said. "That seems suspiciously similar to the entire Summoning Ceremony system."
"At this point, there is no way to know which came first. Maybe what Doctor S developed in 1999 was no more than a small piece of Wisdom. And if it is not that simple, the similarity may have caused some kind of crossed wires somewhere."
Glasses Knight Rachel, who stood at the ready, was correct.
And…
"To reiterate, I saved a girl during my fight against an organization that started with Killer Intent Antenna. And it required rewriting history. Do you think Wisdom would be able to use that same method to overturn my mom's death?"
"Wisdom herself cannot leave the other world, but that does not mean she has no influence in this world. You should know that well enough after everything I did to you, brother."
This was strange.
The White Queen was speculating and discussing possibilities instead of just stating facts.
"That said, she is only omniscient. She only has all her intellectual knowledge and no direct power. Or perhaps some of my power has been stolen from me even as I discuss this here."
"What do you mean?" asked Kyousuke.

The Queen herself looked like she was slowly getting her bearings while inside a bewildering forest.
“Wisdom limited what she told me to narrow my view of the world. Or she did until I met you and began moving between worlds myself.”
Wisdom had chewed up all the letters and words before taking them to the baby bird’s mouth and she had used her lullaby to guide even the baby bird’s dreams in the direction she wanted.
Like a kind older sister who was overprotective to the point of smothering her younger sister.
“I wonder if Wisdom was originally meant as a safety system to control me and prevent me from going berserk, much like the rest of the Unexplored-class was meant to do. And just like Doctor S successfully used the Summoning Ceremony to draw out some portion of a Material’s power, a word-based safety system like Wisdom might be able to extract my power. Of course, it would have to be a small enough amount that I did not notice.”
The White Queen was positing a theory.
It might be as close to the truth as possible, but she had no proof.
But just like the big bang theory, this might be a question that would never have a proven answer.
“If this Wisdom being is in a position to hold the omniscience that matches your omnipotence, it is possible. And it’s also possible she could forcibly resurrect a third party to use as a pawn. The Colorless Little Girl disappeared into the ether and now my vessel mom has unnaturally appeared. The logic is not all that complicated if we assume Wisdom is controlling both of them.”
“Um.”
The modified China dress beauty looked puzzled while leaning back into the white liger next to Aika.
Lu Niang Lan did not seem to understand.
“This Wisdom is a safety system, right? Then why is she trying to make Kyousuke-chan suffer?”
“She may not actually be focused on brother.” The White Queen slowly let out a sigh. “I had been partially summoned to this world before that incident, but that was the first time I came here of my own free will. Since Wisdom was limiting my view of the world through what she told me, wouldn’t it have looked like I was going over her head and accessing all that information without her permission? If Wisdom wants to control me, shutting everything down for the time being would make sense. And I mean shutting down this world, not me.”
“Also, summoning is only possible because there are two worlds,” added Kyousuke. “If only one of them remains, I guess there’s nothing we can do, huh?”
“Wisdom sees *this world as the alternate world*, so she would have no real reason to protect it.”
The Queen made it sound like she had nothing to do with it.

And since she had not intentionally done anything this time, that may have been accurate.
Wisdom was the overprotective big sister trying to set up strict filtering on the home computer. And when that did not work, she started thinking about removing the internet connection from the house.
Of the three girls in old-fashioned shrine maiden outfits, the one with long silver hair breathed a soft sigh.
“So wouldn’t this Wisdom entity be really interested in targeting the boy’s life? I mean, there is no one else the Queen can rely on without worrying about breaking them with her charisma.”
Black-haired Renge belatedly started panicking because she too was a Joruri Method, but blonde Higan only tilted her head curiously. Renge apparently did not want her twin sister to see that world’s oldest version, but it was unlikely the secret would be revealed here. To be honest, Higan could be a little too polite.
…Wisdom’s mentality may have been similar.
She wanted to externally control everything her beloved someone saw, everything they heard, and every word that entered their mind. Everyone in charge of protecting someone would feel that desire to filter things out, but it only remained adorable for Renge because she always failed when she tried. But if you took it far enough, it was like imprisoning that person behind invisible walls. The person kept inside that cage would not be thankful.
And during that discussion…
<You say Wisdom wants to target him, but didn’t we establish she can’t leave the other world?> asked Shigara Masami with ponytail swaying.
Waitress Demon Biondetta poured Shigara Masami some more of a cold carbonated beverage (because the woman would reach for something alcoholic if she did not) and continued the conversation.
“Wouldn’t that explain exactly why she wants an avatar to act in her stead?”
Hence the special vessel.
She had acquired what she needed to make the Colorless Little Girl her pawn.
Kingdom F’s Queen Sinceria placed a hand on her slender chin while her butt squished a balance ball that Aika had barely touched since buying it.
“I am glad that strange being did not target Via, but since my Via was snubbed, should we assume Kyousuke’s mother has even greater precision as a vessel than we do?”
“Do not be ridiculous. No vessel alive is more skilled than you!”
“Rachel, I appreciate the thought, but try to remember what we are talking about. Wisdom pulled this vessel back from beyond the veil of death, so there is no point in discussing the rankings of *vessels who are alive*. Kyousuke’s mother must be enough of a vessel to make that worth it.”
Not to mention that Doctor S had chosen her as a wife.
…Kyousuke should have considered it more rationally.

That research-obsessed man had thrown out all his morals and even experimented on his blood-related son, so would he really have invited *a normal person* into his family? After all, that was his one and only wife and it was obvious that Doctor S would not use looks, personality, educational history, or income to determine someone's value.
Olivia and Sinceria could almost perfectly control a Material, even from the Unexplored-class. Since they could lock onto and precision target the Silhouette weak point, their strength could not be measured using the normal Cost and Sound Range values.
Yet they had been snubbed, as Kingdom F's queen had put it.
Then how much control did Kyousuke's mother have over Materials for her to be chosen?
Would she be able to fully control the Colorless Little Girl while entirely ignoring the Material's mind and soul?
Striped bikini Aika spoke up while leaning back against the curled-up white liger.
"What are you going to do, Onii-chan?"
"It imagine it would be impossible to track down where my mom and sister are as they wander this world. Since my mom has returned from the dead like the Rainy Girl did, she should be able to do the same things that girl can."
He made this clear.
He would admit when he was at a disadvantage.
That was always this boy's stance when faced with a seemingly impossible task.
He would clearly define the invisible hurdles standing before him and make the preparations needed to clear them.
"But we do know what Wisdom is thinking, don't we? She wants to destroy this world so she can limit what the Queen sees. And the biggest obstacle to that would be me, since I was the starting point for all this. If that's all she's thinking about, then it's simple, isn't it? The final battle will begin no matter what we do, so the real question is where we will start it."
Also.
Kyousuke did not really have anything to gain here.
If he did lose, he would be killed while defenseless in that mindless state.
But what would he gain if he won? The Colorless Little Girl would return to the other world and nothing they did to Shiroyama Natsuginu would harm Wisdom who was controlling that vessel remotely.
It was terribly unfair, but Wisdom only saw Kyousuke as a security hole in her filtering system. She wanted to fill in that hole however she could, so why would she set up the rules to give him an advantage?
Her job was to control the White Queen.
She had created a safety system by reshaping the words the White Queen was given into a convenient form that narrowed and limited the Queen's

view of the world. She would do anything to maintain that system. And preserving this world was not a requirement for managing the Queen.
The White Queen had always relied on Wisdom and asked for words and information like a baby bird opening its mouth to ask for food. Although it was unclear if Wisdom wanted to control her like a pet or protect her like a little sister.
So.
If they wanted to fight her, they could not just follow the rules she had set up. They had to add in their own rules.
(Houbi Village and Quad Motors are the hints I need. Although this hinges on how quickly Azalea can respond to my request from Devil's Island.)
"I won't let this keep happening. We might be up against my mom and my sister here, but I will fight them both and bring this to an end. And if I'm gambling with my life here, I need to make sure Wisdom is risking something of equal value. I won't let her go at this with unlimited continues and zero risk."
He would end this.
He would settle everything that had begun so long ago.
And to do that…
"How does this sound as an idea?"

Part 12

They had settled on a general plan.
But there was one thing Shiroyama Kyousuke had not told the others.
And he did not necessarily have a logical reason for that. He was a summoner, but he was also a teenage high school boy. Now that he had freed himself from the bonds of the White Queen, he would not always make the most logical and efficient decision even if it meant selling off his heart and soul.
He was embarrassed.
He was embarrassed to violate the principles he had proclaimed so confidently in the past.
“Queen.”
“What is it, brother?”
In one of the many guest rooms of Aika’s apartment, the White Queen smiled and poured a glass of ice-cold mineral water from the pitcher on the bedside table.
He took the glass and got to the point.
“Despite what I said in front of everyone, I want to get out as much of the pus as I can when we do this. …What I am about to request will probably only get in the way of simply winning, so you can refuse if you don’t think it’s doable.”
“Brother.”
The twintailed girl put her hands on her hips.
But she looked more troubled than angry.
“Do you want me to scold you or comfort you? Tell me and I will do it.”
“I’m not really sure myself.”
He smiled bitterly.
This was different from asking for advice to receive support for the choice he had already made.
This really would put everyone at risk for his own personal reasons.
He had the idea in his head, but he was not sure if it was the right thing to do.
But the White Queen shrugged.
“Brother, who are you fighting for here?”
“?”
“Is it for the human race or for the world? No, Wisdom is using your dead mother to acquire the Colorless Little Girl. That is not such a largescale

issue. This is an extremely small-scale and personal fight, but that is why you cannot back down. So shouldn't you make any decision based on what you claim your goal is here? This is all meaningless if you hold back for the human race or the world's sake and end up winning an unsatisfying victory."
He knew he was indulging in her kindness, but he decided to continue along that line of thought.
"It bothers me that Wisdom brought back my mom now of all times."
"Does it?"
"I don't know what she can do as a vessel, but surely there are better ones if you search all of the living and the dead throughout history. If historical prestige means anything, Kingdom F's very first ruler would be a good example. Yet Wisdom chose my mom. She chose someone who would remind us of our failure that placed those initial cracks between us."
"…"
"And Wisdom intends to wield the Colorless Little Girl. Queen, that is the sister that you killed. …She's doing this on purpose. She's highlighting our mistake and criticizing your actions by drawing a clear line between the mother who can be brought back and the sister who can't. She's saying you did something irreversible, so trying to reconcile is meaningless. But if she can lock you down under her rules again, then no one else will die, so she is asking me to hand you over so you will never dirty your hands again."
The Summoning Ceremony required intense use of the body and the mind. The concentration it required was far greater than a game of shogi or chess and the physical stamina it required was far greater than a game of soccer or basketball. Even if they knew this was psychological warfare similar to heckling, it could still affect the White Queen's condition during the battle itself.
"I intend to accept what I have done wrong," said the Queen. "I have done more than enough to warrant criticism, but that criticism should not come from Wisdom who has only observed everything from the other world."
"That isn't good enough. Responding at all is what she wants. She literally is Wisdom, right? She'll use whatever tricks it takes to bring you down psychologically. And in ways that won't be bearable even if you know what she's trying to do."
"Then what should we do? Surely you aren't saying we should ignore your sister's death and just move on."
"That's exactly what I'm saying."
The White Queen gasped at Kyousuke's response.
Alice (with) Rabbit never could have spoken those words.
"If my sister's death only functions to shackle me, then I'll remove it. I won't let Wisdom manipulate us after she intentionally set it up so you would press the wrong button. And that means we have to do something about that factor."
"Are you serious?"

She was trembling.
As if to say she was not happy about being defended like this.
“You’re going to overturn someone’s death!? You’re going to cancel out my crime!? Sealing away the truth won’t save anyone and it won’t help us!! We won’t even be able to fight Wisdom because you’ll be crushed under the weight of what you’ve done!!”
“Yeah, I know.”
The time had come to violate his past principles.
The time had come to choose one and abandon the other.
So Shiroyama Kyousuke spoke while prepared to carry the weight of his mistakes.
“I want to save the Colorless Little Girl…no, I want to save my dead sister. Just like the Rainy Girl and my mom.”
The White Queen looked even more flabbergasted as she listened to this.
“But, um…”
“In the past, I stopped Benikomichi Fuuki of Killer Intent Antenna. I know it’s ridiculous for me to mock the idea of a deathless world then and rely on resurrecting the dead now, but I have to change my views on this!”
“Do you understand what you are saying? This is not like the Rainy Girl or your mother. That girl…your sister was the victim of my very first murder. And when I have directly killed someone, there is no saving them even if you travel back in time or to a parallel world. Isn’t that the absolute and inviolable rule!?”
“Is it, though?”
Those were the magic words.
Yes, after constantly facing the most powerful enemy out there, Shiroyama Kyousuke would not stop just because something was “impossible”. He had developed the strength to question any claims of impossibility.
Which was why he could speak these words without hesitation.
“What if there was a loophole in the rules we’ve believed in this whole time? Queen, are you prepared to face this? I’m not talking about a cruel reality or a nightmarish defeat. Are you prepared throw out your principles while laughing your head off and reach for the kind of happy ending that looks so unnatural, contrived, and convenient that it makes people want to vomit?”
What if that initial murder had never happened?
What if nothing had happened in that small house ruled by Doctor S?
What if it had ended happily?
What if the boy and the girl had met in an ordinary way with nothing tragic occurring?
“…”
The White Queen bit her lip.
It sounded like a dream come true.
However, it was such a silly idea that speaking it aloud could easily be taken as a sign of weakness.
But.

Even so.
That was a different possible world that would have happened if not for Wisdom’s intervention.
And.
And.
And.
“I am not going to ask you to help me again, brother.”
She slowly looked up, forced back the tears, and let those words out from between her lovely lips.
But *not* as a rejection.
“So let us go help her together. Let us save the soul of that girl who did nothing wrong but was plunged into the depths of the underworld for our mistakes!!”
It was an utterly impossible dream.
But that did not matter to them. The boy and the girl exchanged a handshake as equals.
They had decided on the true win condition.

Between the Lines 3

Words were everything for Wisdom.
The thought of skin-to-skin contact disgusted her.
(md)
The words flowed out.
She could not stop hose words filled with dark emotions.
(wb – ao – xf – oo – kd – iu – jrb)
Wisdom had always specialized in words and the White Queen had always relied on her. Whenever the Queen spoke with or about anything, Wisdom was always there to break everything down and relay the words to the White Queen.
Just like the mother bird flying around the dangerous outside world and bringing food back to the baby bird in the safe nest. From the opposite perspective, it was like a little sister clinging to her older sister's skirt and hiding behind her.
As an older sister, she wanted to sing a lullaby that would give her little sister sweet dreams. She did not care if it was considered overprotective.
The White Queen was too powerful, so Wisdom simply wanted to give her a safe and comfortable environment to live in. One that would never, ever break down.
So Wisdom had covered all points of contact and the White Queen had not actually spoken with anyone else.
That was their relationship.
That should have been enough.
She had decided to give the White Queen anything she wanted. While being very careful that what she was given did not pose a choking hazard. But perhaps that had been a mistake. Wisdom regretted listening to the White Queen's selfish demands.
She should not have shown her the outside world.
Words that did not first pass through her were poison.
And it was Wisdom's own overprotectiveness that had left the White Queen too inexperienced to handle it all.

What is that?

Wisdom still remembered that question.

And she remembered going against her own nature as Wisdom by providing false words in response.
When the White Queen had viewed that world and all its conflicting interests and desires, she had not been looking to Wisdom. Only then had Wisdom seen her in profile.
And in the end, the White Queen had not been satisfied with words alone. She had not accepted simply spying on that world. She had needlessly responded to the summoning, started moving between the two worlds, and tossed Wisdom into a corner of their world like a discarded toy.
Omniscience and omnipotence.
It was blatantly obvious which one would win in a struggle of strength. There was nothing intellectual Wisdom could do while stuck in their world.
But.
What had the Queen acquired from that?
She had been harmed, she had wept, she had been used, and she had been lifted up as a ruler she did not want to be.
If she had never contacted anyone else in the first place and had continued hiding behind Wisdom's back, she never would have been exposed to that unnecessary suffering or used in various plans.
And the humans were a problem too. It made no difference whether they were throwing mudballs or gold coins at her. The White Queen was already perfect, so adding anything else could only harm her. Why did they not understand something so simple?
Their words harmed the White Queen.
What was that Summoning Ceremony nonsense? Anyone would cower down if people started angrily shouting their name for no reason. They would be emotionally shaken. It was laughable to think of that as successfully making contact.
If she only wanted to speak with them, why didn't the Queen realize it was many times more efficient to do it through Wisdom?
If she let Wisdom take charge, the words of the world's people would have the edges rounded off and smoothed down and the surfaces polished so none if it would hurt her.
Wisdom hated being omniscient.
She was aware that part of her wanted to gloat when she saw the White Queen crying or entering a fit of rage.
But that was exactly the point.
She wanted to remain someone who loved the White Queen. She wanted to stay in that position. She wanted to play the glad game. She wanted to see the White Queen's obedient side again before she truly started to hate her. That way she could bring her feelings back to where they had been. That way the part of her that wanted to protect the White Queen would not become something else entirely.
The White Queen could be controlled.

Attempting it by brute force was meaningless. Then you would only be defeated and dragged around like the many other Unexplored-classes had been. Using strength to oppose the omnipotent Queen was meaningless. It may have been Wisdom's realization of that which had earned her that title.
So she thought about it differently.
To construct a safety system for the White Queen, you had to know what desires would appear within her and then control them.
And Wisdom could do that.
All she had to do was use her words to narrow the Queen's view.
She had to do it.
It was the only option.
Wisdom was like a big sister and she knew she should never bring harm to the Queen who was like a little sister to her.
And yet the omniscient might just kill the omnipotent.
She might get carried away and overturn the usual way of things.
No matter what kind of trickery it required.

Facts

- The grudge between Kyousuke and the Queen has been resolved.
- The Rainy Girl, aka Umie Shouko, diverged outside of history when her death was overturned. As a result, she can independently use paranormal powers without relying on Materials or the Blood-Sign system.
- The true villain was Wisdom, a being who had continually given the White Queen advice in the other world.
- Wisdom resurrected Kyousuke's mother, Natsuginu, a vessel capable of even greater precision control than Olivia, in order to take control of the Colorless Little Girl. Her goal is to create a perfect safety system she can use to control the White Queen. For that reason, Kyousuke is a hindrance since he gives the Queen freedom.
- To the White Queen, Wisdom was no more than an inorganic search engine or interpreter app.
- Doctor S's greatest fear was that his wife would choose her identity as a mother and side with their young children. That small house had not been an absolute dead end and it could have ended with the good rewarded and the evil punished had some decisions been made slightly differently.
- Now, go rescue the Colorless Little Girl who is actually the murdered little sister. Only then will that boy and girl really and truly have earned the right to walk side by side.

Stage 04: Unexplored Summon://Blood-Sign

“No.”
“Queen, you still cannot win like this. No matter what.”
(Stage 04 Open 08/25 23:30)
Unexplored Summon://Blood-Sign

Part 1

Midnight was fast approaching.
Nevertheless, Toy Dream 35 bustled with activity even in the oppressive heat. After all, summer break had arrived for the amusement park city. Roller coasters rose and fell through the gaps between buildings, the lights on a giant Ferris wheel kept the time like a clock face, and delighted screams echoed from the freefall ride attached to the broadcast tower sticking above the other buildings. A glance directly down would have shown people crowding the bridges as well. A parade of floats was in progress.
Families were out during the day and lovers during the night.
Toy Dream 35's attractions never slept; they only showed a different side of themselves.
And within all that…
"…"
If he was being honest, Shiroyama Kyousuke did not know where his mother Natsuginu or the Colorless Little Girl would attack while under Wisdom's control.
But knowing that Wisdom was specifically trying to harm him changed his plans considerably. He could not predict when or where a battle would begin or who would be caught in the crossfire, so he could no longer visit the school pool for fun.
He chose as deserted a place as he could find and waited there.
That would reduce the possibility of anyone else being harmed once the battle did begin.
"Not that this will help all that much," whispered a silver-twintailed girl leaning against the complex arrangement of steel beams supporting the back of a sign. They were on the roof of a relatively tall building in the blind spot behind that giant LCD sign, but the brightly lit attractions were still not far away.
She lightly kicked at a reinforced plastic container sitting next to her (although it was only the size of a cooler needing both hands to carry).
"It is fortunate Azalea Magentarain was more obedient than expected. And that she has access to such an excellent transport system. We have the age of Repliglass to thank for the air delivery to take less than half a day."
Kyousuke crouched down and performed some kind of work while listening to her.

He was lighting some special incense he had spent a small fortune to buy from Incense Expert Ellie Slide. It had not been packed into a grenade, but that allowed the smoke to last longer. A brass censer might sound fancy, but the basic idea was the same as the old-fashioned porcelain pigs used to keep mosquitos away.
Death wafted up into the air.
The stench of death had been artificially reproduced with a delicate arrangement of incense.
According to Ellie Slide, spraying the correct substance on the burning incense could adjust the number of days after death the stench replicated, but he did not need that kind of precision now.
It smelled like rotting fruit with a hint of sweetness mixed in.
The smell must have attracted the bugs gathered around the light of the giant LCD screen because a few of them approached. They looked powerless, but they must have been the kinds of bugs that gathered around human corpses. The lovers enjoying the thrill rides so close by would have no idea Kyousuke was doing this here in the dark.
The hint had come from the stench that lingered in Meinokawa Renge and Higan's noses.
The girl lightly clenched her battle costume in both hands, perhaps out of concern the stench would mix with the night's sweltering air and get on her clothes.
"Honestly… You have no right to criticize my interests after this, brother."
"This is necessary."
Wisdom's goal was to have the White Queen all to herself. The global issues did not matter to her. That was why she was bringing those past deaths to the battlefield to shake and fracture the bonds between Kyousuke and the Queen. The combination of his mother and sister would never happen by pure coincidence.
To repeat, he did not know when or where the attack would happen.
So he would take matters into his own hands.
By emphasizing the elements of death, he could increase the odds of this deathly enemy appearing. The school during the day and the school at night were the same physical location, but which one saw more evil spirits?
Instead of just waiting, he wanted to prepare a time and conditions favorable for this enemy to change the encounter rate.
"What if they do not show up?"
"Then we keep doing it until they do. There's nothing else we can do."
The death incense was only a booster.
That meant they could not use it as a starter. Ellie Slide had not trusted the American dollar because of something or other about the latest counterfeiting prevention tech it used, so he had paid her in old coins that could be exchanged in ticket shops. She had said the following while counting up those coins:

“Your target is wandering around, right? First, figure out the rules behind that. When they smell an abnormally concentrated death smell, does it draw them in or push them away? Once you know that, the rest is like using the north or south pole of a magnet. You can set up the censers to guide the target magnet wherever you want. That means you can start the battle at the location of your choosing. …Listen, you aren’t getting an immediate effect where burning the incense guarantees the ghost appears. It’s all in how you use it. To be clear, I’m not going to give you any further help if you come crying to me about how it didn’t work right away.”
Basically, the incense could spiritually disturb an empty location to move the “haunted location” where the ghost would appear.
Kyousuke breathed a soft sigh.
“So it’s all about figuring out the statistics. The world isn’t going to end tonight if we don’t settle this and our odds of a hit will increase each time we do it. Just like the odds in a game of Russian roulette change with each shot taken. Eventually is good enough. I just care about starting the battle somewhere that won’t get other people involved.”
Yes.
Kyousuke had compared it to Russian roulette.
…Which meant the odds of this happening were not zero.
It all vanished.
The amusement park city was flooded with light and sound even in the middle of the night, but all noise, all human presence, and all signs of life vanished. It was like the depths of a secluded cave. The incredible stillness was reminiscent of thick bedrock and they felt a strange pressure that made them want to scream and run around.
They became less aware of the oppressive heat and the bugs drawn in by the death stench had disappeared at some point. It was like the harbinger of a great disaster.
The silver-twintailed girl stepped away from the steel beam.
“Looks like we got it in one.”
This had of course been possible from a probability standpoint.
It would mean a sudden end to your game of Russian roulette, but now that it had happened, they had to respond. Luckily, Kyousuke had done this because he wanted to clash with the strongest assassin being controlled by Wisdom.
He heard footsteps.
But from where?
A single figure stood at the center of the large square rooftop. The boy and girl who had fought so many deadly battles in the past could not even tell when this person had appeared there. But they doubted she had arrived through the door leading to the elevator or emergency stairs.

It was like Shiroyama Natsuginu had been summoned here regardless of coordinate.
She gave the opposite impression of the silver-twintailed girl.
The figure standing with her back to the attractions beyond the railing was a reserved adult woman who would have easily blended into the city.
She was a parent, but she had to still be in her twenties. Her chestnut hair was tied back behind her head and she wore a blouse and a skirt that reached her calves. She also wore a housework apron on top of that. She may have been intentionally restraining her true abilities. She may have wanted to protect something badly enough to do that.
Kyousuke was taller than her now.
The boy silently narrowed his eyes and spoke.
“Mom.”
“I am aware my presence here is out of the ordinary.”
She did not directly respond.
…And that may have been for the best.
“But…but now that I am here, I am breathing and my heart is beating. That alone is gradually distorting history. That means I do not need to worry about how little or how much I change. My very presence brings change, so I will do this. …Kyousuke. It is true that man killed me. *But the person who killed my daughter is right there.*”
If the result had been overturned in the same way as with the Rainy Girl, then his mother was not a ghost; she really was alive. But the circumstances were different for their other family member, his little sister. However, Shiroyama Kyousuke did not think making a plea to emotion was going to change anything here. If the world was that simple and as beautiful as a diamond made only out of carbon, then the tragedy in that small house ruled by Doctor S never would have happened.
Even when you found something you wished to protect even if it meant placing your own wellbeing second, there were times when reality would not allow you to reach out and save them.
“If she tells me to kill her murderer, then that is what I will do.”
She must have been the type to go with the flow. Or maybe she had been afraid of change. In a way, that may have been one requirement for adulthood. At the very least, she had been unable to involve the entire world in a battle for her own powerful emotions and pride like Kyousuke and the Queen had. And that was why Doctor S and Wisdom had been able to take advantage of her soul. Even though she might just have enough power to change the world and protect everything.
“But that isn’t what she longed for. It was always ‘protecting Nii-sama’. Even after she was killed, that’s all she ever asked for. So what else can I do? I was a failure of a mother who couldn’t give her anything, so I can at least do this for her now!!”
“No, mom.”

Her shouted words were like a thunderclap, but Shiroyama Kyousuke gently shook his head.
He too had tried that and failed.
He had seen that as the only solution to the fundamental mistake the White Queen had made, so he had been unable to elevate himself to the level of trying to correct her instead.
“We didn’t want a father who shouted angrily at us or a mother who praised us unconditionally. We wanted adults who would scold us when we’d done something wrong and guide us in the right direction. If we’d only had that, we never would have lost our way.”
He had to show her.
He had to teach her.
He had to use to use the hands that carried the same blood as her to let her know that choices were not something you left up to someone else; they were something you made yourself. And this was not about the gods and heroes of some distant world. He wanted to let her know that the people breathing the same air in that small house could have done that too.
And it was not too late to change things.
He would show that it *could* be helped.
He would not let anything throw his one and only little sister into the great pit of the dead because that story was supposedly already over.
He would bring happiness to them all.
He would give this a happy ending.
“That’s nonsense, mom.”
That small house had become a stifling prison, but he would not let anyone put on a pitying smile and claim that meant there had been no hope or possibility there!!
“You’re doing this for my sister? No, you’re just giving up. You’re only thinking about maximizing cost-effectiveness and stepping down at a convenient place. No one will ever get what they really want that way! Doing things half-assed never saves anyone!!”
Shiroyama Kyousuke pulled out a metal cylinder the size of a hairspray can and pulled the pin with his teeth.
He tossed it onto the building rooftop and pulled his commercial Blood-Sign from the back of his hoodie.
This was the world’s smallest battle. It was a family quarrel.
But some days, he was willing to risk his life for something like that.
Now he just had to raise his voice.
“Queen, help me out. Let’s settle this here!!”
“You can try, but I will show you the power of a mother’s convictions after she failed to protect anything, Kyousuke!!”
As expected, Wisdom herself did not make an appearance.
Kyousuke’s mother was only a vessel, so could she summon the Colorless Little Girl inside herself without using the White Thorns and Petals?

A moment later, something happened before the Incense Grenade could detonate, setting up the 20m cube of the Artificial Sacred Ground.
“Yes, brother. As you wish.”
The strongest Unexplored-class dropped straight toward Shiroyama Natsuginu’s head like a white bolt of lightning. Specifically, this was *the real Queen* who had been waiting on top of the giant LCD sign.
His mother clenched her teeth and gave a shout.
“Wipe that…smug look off your face, murderer!!”
With an explosive noise, gray dust filled the air. The concrete must have been somewhat destroyed.
But since the Queen’s full power was enough to manipulate the sun to turn a portion of the moon to glass just for fun, this was a miniscule change.
Although that only proved she had made sure as much of the blow as possible had burst within the target’s body instead of escaping elsewhere.
But then who was the *silver-twintailed girl* who had been standing next to Kyousuke in the fancy battle costume this whole time?
First of all, Shiroyama Kyousuke was a summoner who wielded a Blood-Sign.
He could not summon a Material without a vessel.
“You get ready too, Aoi. You’re my trump card.”
“Argh, I thought I was just humoring the Queen with one of her pranks, so I never thought I would end up with such a crucial role!!”
The girl loudly complained while removing her hair clips to regain her long straight hair.
Yes.
The girl next to Kyousuke was Meinokawa Aoi, his contracted vessel.
The Incense Grenade finally detonated and the Artificial Sacred Ground appeared. That was enough for Kyousuke to grimace. The dust had obscured his vision, but the Artificial Sacred Ground itself would capture the enemy and preserve a location for them to fight.
“Not yet…”
A resentful voice reached him from beyond that filthy veil of dust.
But her true grudge may not have been with Kyousuke or the Queen.
“This is not over yet. I can at least grant her wish to be useful for her ‘Nii-sama’!!”
A gust of wind spiraled around.
The gray dust was blown away and a white glow flew toward them. She did not pathetically roll along the roof or anything like that. She elegantly landed lightly on her feet.
But fully blocking an attack from the White Queen and getting her to fall back was an extraordinary feat.
“It has begun, brother.”
“Yes, I know.”

Shiroyama Natsuginu was plain, reserved, and had tried to protect her family even if it meant restraining herself, but she had failed to draw out her courage in the very end. She was a woman drowning in regret.
<Nii-sama.>
But she was nowhere to be seen.
She had transformed.
Into something hopelessly dangerous and psychedelic.
<Nii-sama>
She appeared to be about 10. Her translucent body was covered by something like a one-piece swimsuit or leotard and a clione-like light throbbed rhythmically in the center of her chest. She had long straight hair with bangs that hid her eyes and points on either side of the head that resembled cat ears. Weapons surrounded her hips like a skirt and twelve giant old tomes were arranged around her back like an angel's wings or a clock face.
She was known as the Colorless Little Girl.
That Queen killer Unexplored-class contained the young life a certain woman had failed to protect.
<When I'm reborn, then I'll take your side, Nii-sama. I will always, always, always take your side and fight the White Queen for you.>
This power was specifically designed to kill her daughter's killer.
Summoning her to this world may have been that mother's form of atonement.
"Yes, if that is what you want, then I will do whatever it takes to give concrete power to your wishes! Even if it means destroying the world or contradicting myself!!"
Two voices mixed together.
The vessel's own voice forced its way out against the Material's will.
This may have been a glimpse of the talent that surpassed even Olivia and Sinceria.
If so, it was very sad.
She really had chosen the wrong time to show her courage. Hers may have been a life of constantly failing to reach out a helping hand in time and being crushed by the guilt and regret after the fact.
"But I'll break that chain here." The boy spun his long Blood-Sign into a fighting stance. "I too lived a life of failure and disgrace. But my defeats were after I made an attempt! When you lose like that, you can use it to reach your next opportunity. It might be painful, miserable, agonizing, and frustrating, but you can convert all that into the strength to move on!! I'll teach you that here, mom. You might think you were cleverly backing down before making a serious mistake, but you're just lying to yourself. You never had to stifle yourself. So I'll teach you how it's done! I'll show you how to reach for what you really want even when you're battered and bleeding!!"
Shiroyama Kyousuke and the White Queen.

The strongest summoner and Material held hands and faced the symbol of their failure and defeat.
They intently focused their minds on what hung in the balance.
No one was talking about a largescale battle or global stakes.
“Ohhhhhh!!”
“Give up, Kyousuke. This is no longer about logic and I don’t care if I contradict myself. You should be standing by her side, not the White Queen’s!!”
This was about something much more important.
If those two lovers could not save his family here, they would never make any progress.

Part 2

With a pleasant clack, Kyousuke's White Thorn shattered the three-dimensional Rose. The many red glowing Petals scattered every which way. They were on the roof of an ordinary building.
In truth, once the White Queen and the Colorless Little Girl were clashing, building up another Material did not really matter. No matter what he summoned from the Regulation, Divine, or Unexplored-classes, the Material's attacks could not influence the battle.
"If that's what you're thinking, then you're wrong, mom."
"?"
The Colorless Little Girl's small hand pulled a longish spear from the many weapons spread around her like a skirt. Her aim was difficult to predict since there was no emotion in her gaze, but what Kyousuke's side had to do remained the same.
"Move out front, Queen! Don't let the Colorless Little Girl crush you until I've finished building up my Material!!"
"You got it, brother!!"
(She is the Queen killer, a special Unexplored-class I built myself.)
The Colorless Little Girl licked her lips.
That translucent Unexplored-class had never done anything like that before.
"Are you bluffing to rattle us? You move out front, Kyousuke. If you don't, the Queen will die."
<Don't let her get to you, boy! Staying calm is the best way to support the Queen!!>
Normally, the Material would be ruled by its fighting instincts and would join the battle even if the vessel tried to stop it. It was only the White Queen's pressure preventing that now.
He was still only letting her protect him.
He clenched his teeth and moved his Blood-Sign more accurately than ever before.
(That means she might not be able to withstand an attack from an Unexplored-class other than the White Queen. And that would be really useful now that I screwed up and lost control of her! That's why she can't completely ignore the other Unexplored-classes even though she's stronger than the White Queen!!)
That also meant he had no chance if he only relied on the Queen to the end.

That was hardly surprising when he had designed the Colorless Little Girl as a Queen killer. In a simple battle between the White Queen and the Colorless Little Girl, it would end just like a predator devouring its prey in the natural world.
He could not let the apparent stability confuse him.
He needed to deliver the final blow.
There was no winning this if he did not sharpen the scorpion's tail as the summoner.
The vessel inside the Original Red (b) slime spoke directly in his mind.
<Hurry it up, boy!! We have to at least get past the Divine-class to stand a chance!!>
"I know that! More importantly, restrain its fighting instincts as much as you can, Aoi! Making an attack too early would be suicide!!"
The pleasant clacking sounds continued.
A Blood-Sign hit a White Thorn, which hit the red glowing Petals and knocked them into the Spots open in the air.
However, this did not come from Shiroyama Kyousuke.
The girl of about 10 mechanically opened her lovely lips while sliding her hand along the spear shaft she held.
And a mixture of two voices left those lips.
"Middle #934 (k – nn – td – fh)."
<Understood, mother.>
<What!? The Material is using the Blood-Sign itself!?>
"Calm down, Aoi. Whatever might be theoretically possible, this won't be all that strategically valuable in practice!!"
The Little Girl skillfully manipulated her spear in one hand while the other hand pulled out a hatchet and aimed for the White Queen's neck. But whether or not it scored a direct hit did not matter. There was a sound like a giant balloon popping and a massive electric attack burst out in a fan shape. It was a lot like a point-blank range shotgun blast that used high-voltage electricity.
"!?"
Those silver twintails flipped around.
A few pieces of white cloth spread out like wings and fluttered in the wind.
The bluish-white electricity caught the edges of those and scorched them black, but the Queen herself was fine. She had perfectly slipped through the gaps of the mesh-shaped attack.
It was the building rooftop that did not survive.
Two or three floors gave out in quick succession and the Artificial Sacred Ground changed location each time.
It was more like being caught several times in a row than it was like falling.
Once they finally came to a stop, they were standing in the toy section of a dark department store. Luckily, it was after hours. In the darkness and with the rubble surrounding them, the Toy Dream mascots looked like creepy monsters instead of products meant to produce smiles.

There was a light in the darkness.
This light was not the Petals or White Thorns floating in the air.
The light calmly flashed at the center of the Colorless Little Girl's chest.
She did not bother taking care of her hatchet.
Instead of pulling it back, she loosened her grip to throw it while her empty hand returned to her skirt.
Her spinning spear…no, her Blood-Sign struck another White Thorn.
"Now do High #61 (s – st – ag)."
<I will do it repeatedly.>
A blood-red whip sliced through the air and accumulated sound within itself. It was guaranteed to do damage if it hit and a miss would double its force. No matter what happened, it benefited the Colorless Little Girl, so the small girl obeyed the instructions while moving as if dancing with a ribbon.
The shelves and the register counter were knocked over.
But Kyousuke continued building up his Material all the while.
And he observed the situation at the same time.
"They're focused on a representation of sound and number. Since that usage is specialized for the abbreviated number, the focus is on how many Petals they use, so they should not interfere much in our general gathering of letters. We have to let the Queen bear with it for now, but this will not affect our speed."
<You seem to be ignoring the key point here. She can fight and build herself up on her own, so no one can control her. This is less like a summoning and more like a god descending to go on a rampage!>
This had not happened when the Colorless Little Girl was fighting as an individual.
Did this show just how powerful Wisdom was?
Or…
"Curse my mom. Come to think of it, she would have had a close-up view of Doctor S's original research when he completed the format back in 1999. But would those observations really be enough to pull this off? If so, does she have specialized summoner skills on top of the ability to fully control the Material like Olivia can?"
<How many levels beyond the rest of us is your mother!? And I thought *I* was special as a fully artificial vessel!!>
She did not need to let it take control of her.
That vessel could control the Material and fight as a summoner.
That might sound frightening, but this really just meant she was fighting on the same field as Kyousuke. Since she was gathering Petals based on sound and number, it was incredibly easy to predict what she would target with her White Thorns.
She may have had been unbelievable precision as a vessel, but she was still his mother. She had not focused everything on being a summoner like Doctor S or Kyousuke had.
She could not reach the same heights while trying to master both.

“Middle (k)-…”
“Not good enough.”
<Mother, that is an error.>
She fell out of her tempo.
Kyousuke’s White Thorn bounced off the Artificial Sacred Ground’s wall and knocked the Colorless Little Girl’s White Thorn off course from an acute angle. And this was more than just interference. He also used this hit to knock the Petals he wanted into the Spots.
They were inside an ordinary department store, but he did not need to be in a grand temple or cathedral to deliver a finishing blow to that extraordinary Unexplored-class.
Or more specifically…
“Taboo 3: A White Thorn remaining on the field must not enter a Spot while you have no White Thorns in stock.”
<Nii-sama.>
“Which one of you was that? My sister, or my mom pretending to be young again?”
“Kyousuke!!”
“Oh, now that was mom. If you’re just going to swing that Blood-Sign around blindly, I don’t even need to build up my Material. I can put you in checkmate right here and now!!”
The Queen killer Unexplored-class’s eyes clearly shifted from the twintailed girl to the boy.
He was not talking about whether or not defeating the Colorless Little Girl with the Summoning Ceremony’s penalty was realistic. As long as he highlighted the risk, they would have to respond to it.
He had been given this chance from the moment they used the human rules of the Blood-Sign system.
This was not nonhuman Wisdom or the Colorless Little Girl trampling on the rules with some hopeless divine punishment or calamity. The key person here was Kyousuke’s mother. This was a battle between humans using the human rules.
<Hey, we still haven’t left the Regulation-class. One attack from the Little Girl will obliterate me!!>
“I know that, but the Queen isn’t going to last on her own. Draw their attention and dodge their attacks. We can reach the next stage as long as we keep them from focusing on the Queen!”
<That is easier said than done! The Queen’s presence might be restraining the Material some, but do you have any idea how hard it is to hold the reins of these things!?>
“Here they come.”
The Colorless Little Girl pulled a boomerang from the many weapons spread around her like a skirt.
The mother’s words left the daughter’s mouth.
“I will support you, so do what it is you want to do! Do not hold back!!”

As soon as she threw it, a tornado had already developed.
The giant blender of violent winds and vacuum directly attacked the White Queen while throwing out additional sparks. The color changed in the blink of an eye and it transformed into an orange pillar of fire.
It rose to the higher floors and covered everything from the ceiling to the toy section here.
The tornado's destructive power tore away the outer walls and pillars that had just barely managed to survive until now.
This floor was essentially the "roof" of the building now.
This was the most violent of methods, like tearing off the roof of a car to make it a convertible.
And.
The stone flung up by the eruption built up plenty of energy in their descent from the sky and struck with more speed than a bullet. It was like the fire arrows raining down upon a castle. There were hundreds of them, thousands of them, or even more. They glowed like heated metal as they fell toward Kyousuke and his Material's heads.
But Kyousuke actually laughed.
"That's pretty lazy on the aiming there. They're attacking over a general area because they don't have time to aim carefully."
<That doesn't make it any easier to dodge!!>
He had no choice but to use his protective circle to defend Aoi.
The Queen and Kyousuke.
The mother and Little Girl could not decide which to attack, so their attacks lost their shine. The edges of the White Queen's fancy ribbons had torn a bit, but she did not seem harmed herself.
And as long as this situation was allowed to continue, Kyousuke could bring his Material to ever-greater heights.
He now had a sexy woman with long silver hair and brown skin.
Divine-class. Cost: 8. Sound Range: High.
She was an Egyptian goddess whose name began with an N. Her name was the Greek form of Nebtho. As the sister of the victim Osiris and wife of the perpetrator Set, she was the goddess of purification and atonement whose tears had washed away the sin of god-slaying.
"I've reached…the gods. This is where it really begins, Aoi!"
< – – –!?>
She flinched.
He heard some kind of voice, but his mind could not convert it properly.
The Colorless Little Girl held one hand out toward them with the other still holding the Blood-Sign spear.
"Let's do this."
<Nii-sama, you are in the way.>
And then it happened.
Buzz!!
It sounded like an old cathode ray tube being turned on.

The scenery had already blurred.
They now stood on the decoratively-lit rails supporting the course of a roller coaster that passed between Toy Dream 35's buildings. They ignored gravity by standing straight out from the side.
It did not matter how far away it was.
As long as he was defended by the protective circle, the Summoning Ceremony battle could continue even if they were touching the sun or a blackhole.
A few centimeters and a hundred light years were essentially the same.
The White Queen clicked her tongue and looked around.
"Is she teleporting around so you miss your shots, brother!?"
She had used this to his advantage when fighting the White Queen before. The terrain had been shifted after the fact to transform even the laziest shot into the perfect shot. But this used it against him. Even when he carefully calculated out the course and focused on every little thing, she would shake the table and ruin it all.
However…
"Not a problem." Kyousuke did not look worried. "I came up with this strategy and I was the one instructing her. Colorless Little Girl, I perfectly understand your idiosyncrasies This tugging at the tablecloth doesn't matter when I can predict the magnitude of the effect in advance!"
<…>
His sister fell silent and his mother continued speaking through her mouth.
"Honestly, a brilliant son is a real pain when he makes himself your enemy!!"
"Was that a compliment? Why?"
"I am saying the apple doesn't fall far from the tree. You are a lot like that man!"
"I see. Thanks for history's most effective psychological attack. I'm seriously about to puke!!"
The young hand extended toward him again.
There was a hint of anger in her eyes and her puffed-out cheeks, but did that emotion belong to his sister or to his mother who could not keep up as a summoner?
Vessel and summoner.
It was the same as how the lyricist and composer would use slightly but definitely different parts of their brains when writing the same song.
Buzz!!
Now they were on a twisting waterslide that connected a building rooftop to an illuminated night pool. Specifically, they were standing on the underside. Having them hanging there like bats may have been meant to disturb Kyousuke's senses and get him to miss a shot.
But it changed nothing.

The more effort the Colorless Little Girl or Kyousuke's mother spent on these tricks, the more he could build up his Material in peace. He had already explained the logic behind that.
"How!?"
"Is it that surprising? Training is built on a foundation of dissatisfaction and longing. Someone as multitalented as you by default wouldn't understand the fear of having nothing left if this is taken from you!! Only after feeling that fear and insufficiency can you train your body to the point of destroying yourself!!"
You had to focus on a single thing to truly shine.
You could not master two things at once.
And given Kyousuke's accuracy as a summoner, his shots would not lose their edge even if he was moved to a freefall gondola or the edge of a bungee jump platform.
Now it was one of the complexly structured supports for a Ferris wheel.
Shiroyama Kyousuke and the Colorless Little Girl jumped down and readied their Blood-Signs like normal.
"Cost: 19. Sound Range: Middle."
Given time, this was bound to happen.
This was not a true battle where the White Thorns crashed together to interfere with each other in the fight over the Petals. Kyousuke effectively had control of where almost all the Petals went, so he built up his Material in no time.
With 10 minutes to work with, he could just barely reach it.
"Come forth, member of the Unexplored-class – Lady of 'Purple Lightning' that Separates Good from Evil (iu – ao – eu – ei – kub – miq – a – ci – pl)."
A light sound followed.
A sickly woman with only some purple cloth to cover her nudity was seated in a rickety old wheelchair. The sound came from the center of her chest. She had been pierced through by a dart casually tossed by the Colorless Little Girl.
She really was the Queen killer.
Shiroyama Kyousuke had overcome countless difficulties to create this bizarre Unexplored-class from the ground up.
"Too weak."
His mother's words rang cold while she stood upside-down on the underside of the waterslide like a bat.
From the tip of the needle to the fletching, that dull-colored weapon was made from a heavy metal even denser than tungsten steel. The Lady of Purple Lightning specialized in long-distance beam attacks, so this attack challenged her in her own field. It was like an armor-piercing round from a tank's gun. Even the smallest hole would have been fatal, but the dark red damage spread as if the wound was peeling back.
The Unexplored-classes were all shaped much like human girls and their Silhouette weak point tended to be located in their heart.

<Kah!?>
A gasping and dumbfounded noise reached Kyousuke from his vessel, Meinokawa Aoi.
Their defeat was guaranteed now.
Once Kyousuke and Aoi were rendered motionless, it would become a pure battle between the White Queen and the Colorless Little Girl. Then it was no more than predator vs. prey in the natural world. Even if the White Queen was the strongest, she was no match for the Colorless Little Girl who had been specifically designed as a Queen killer.
“Is that how you thought this would work, mom?”
“What!?”
Kyousuke shouted a single word just before his supposedly guaranteed defeat arrived.
“Switch!!”

Part 3

Hadn’t Shigara Masami said those two had hacked the Summoning Ceremony?
This was never going to end as a normal battle. And nothing said the Colorless Little Girl was the only one who could cheat like that. Freedom Award 3000 had said it was both of them. And since the Colorless Little Girl had in fact been created by Kyousuke, it was best to think of all the cheating as coming back to him.
He would win this battle.
He would win so everyone could survive with a smile on their face.
And there was one rule he had to break in order to do that.
(10 minutes.)
Time felt like it had stopped as Kyousuke blatantly clenched his teeth on the underside of the waterslide leading to an illuminated rooftop night pool.
Yes. He had always expected Meinokawa Aoi to be defeated.
(I can only just barely reach the Unexplored-class in 10 minutes, so *that isn’t enough.* The only way to win this is to reach that point and then start switching between Materials so I can challenge the Colorless Little Girl with everything I’ve got!!)
So he would break that rule.
He would not let the match end in ten minutes. And without receiving a penalty. If his Material was fatally wounded, he would *break free of them* instead of accepting the loss. He would switch to a different vessel and continue the battle right where he had left off, with all the Petals he had earned intact.
It was unprecedented, but it was not impossible.
Shigara Masami, who had taken one step into the Divine-class, had brushed off “the shock of seeing the death of the god she believed in” after her Material was destroyed. She had said the shock was not that much when she too was at the level of a god.
Kyousuke was still human, so he could not take it that far.
He could not do it by brute force, so some trickery was called for.
In other words…
“Aoi, do it nowwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwww!!”
A pleasant bursting sound rang out.
The Lady of Purple Lightning vanished into thin air. She had had a fist-sized hole in her chest, but this was not how a defeated Material would

disappear. Vessel Meinokawa Aoi had used her clockwork arms to pull off her own head.
“Wha-!?”
Shiroyama Natsuginu may not have ever seen anything like this before.
But it had happened in Houbi Village.
When Aoi had been targeted, she had removed her head from her body to sidestep the rules of the Summoning Ceremony. At the time, the Blood-Sign system as a whole had failed to find an answer for whether the center of the vessel’s body (and thus where the Material should reside) was the brain or the heart, so it had crashed and the Artificial Sacred Ground had burst.
“Gah!!”
Her voice reached Kyousuke physically now.
Aoi’s body was flung from the Artificial Sacred Ground for breaking the rules. But the outcome was still undecided for a brief moment here.
Kyousuke puled a small knife from his pocket, shallowly cut his thumb, and swung his arm horizontally to scatter drops of blood outwards.
It really did only take the span of a breath.
The special vocalization method he used was a technique of an age before the Blood-Sign system back when the gods were left in charge of the paranormal.
“I bind this covenant of blood in the name of The Spirit of Fluttering ‘Yellow’ Gills that Rules the Heavens (s – a – so – v o z – t i x – e i – y w – z a), one of the Three which manage and guide the summoning ceremony. You are of human flesh with a proper heart and soul, yet from this moment onward, you shall be a limited vessel that can hold all things. You shall be a lord of emptiness that uses the power filling you to at times bend the laws of this world. So I shall prepare this vessel. I am a summoner, unable to leave the world of man, yet a symbol of haughty intellect that uses power from beyond the world of man to guide the world of man to the next age!!”
This had not been coordinated in advance.
Kyousuke was not alone. He had simply had vessels waiting at suspicious points around Toy Dream 35. Vessels without a contract could not remember him any more than ordinary people, but that was not the case when they had a professional summoner within eyeshot.
So in this case…
“Murasame Kuina!! You’re up!!”
<God, really!? But now I don’t owe you anything for saving Sayuri!!>
She had been waiting in one of the cars of the Ferris wheel located right alongside the water slide.
She had stuck her tongue out of the open window and caught Kyousuke’s blood in her mouth.
That passed the baton to her.
The nearly-dead Lady of Purple Lightning moved to the stable human vessel and Kyousuke used his Blood-Sign to acquire many more Petals. This

Material might be fatally wounded, but he could cancel that out by switching to another Unexplored-class.
Unexplored-class. Cost: 18. Sound Range: Low.
The Bizarre Gray Mollusk Who Swims the Starry Ocean (en – a – hf – ei – ja – o – cd – to – jok).
Her upper body was that of a shamelessly nude girl, but from the hips down, she was a giant octopus with 8 legs glowing a dull gray. Those legs extended, struck, tangled, and constricted. She was an expert in punches, strangleholds, pins, and all forms of close-quarters combat.
“Tch!!”
Kyousuke’s mother clicked her tongue just as the Little Girl let fly a few hatchets.
She may have been trying to kill the Material instantly like with the dart before, but the same technique would not work again.
“!!”
An ordinary vessel like Murasame Kuina had far less precise control over the Material’s movements than Sinceria or Olivia. Even with the Queen’s pressure keeping it from moving out ahead, Kyousuke would have to get in the way with his protective circle if it came to it.
The hatchets missed and sliced through the water slide they were standing on.
Their next footing was the support pillars for the entire Ferris wheel, which were a mountain of steel beams arranged something like a jungle gym or bicycle spokes.
Meinokawa Aoi fell limply from the Ferris wheel support and into the ocean below, but all Kyousuke could do for her was break off one of the glow-in-the-dark lights, get it flashing, and toss it after her to mark her location.
Aika and Lu Niang Lan had snuck Government and Illegal troops around the city, so he could only pray they would collect her.
<The Unexplored-class and your vessels are disposable to you? You’re so damn wasteful!>
“Sorry, Kuina, but our enemy isn’t going to wait around!!”
Kyousuke had only heard of this in *a different history*, but the Illegal summoner contracted with Benikomichi Fuuki had apparently switched between partners to fit the needs of the battle, like he was using a golf set.
Kuina probably would not last long either.
And he already had a countermeasure ready for that.
<No fair, Nii-sama.>
“Don’t pout your lips over something so trivial, my bratty little sister.”
The 10 minute limit had been reset.
“And as powerful as the Colorless Little Girl is, she’s only designed to kill the White Queen.”
“Kh!! Are you suggesting she can’t ignore the damage if the other *ordinary* Unexplored-classes get a hit in on her!?”

The Little Girl was an abnormal being that did not exist in the natural world.
The Unexplored-classes were the very laws of the other world and their power was meant to be wielded to maintain balance, so their attacks would likely affect her.
He no longer had to hang back while the White Queen fought.
He no longer had to let her protect him.
“Grarr!!”
“Grarr!!”
With bestial roars, the White Queen and the Gray Mollusk crossed paths from the right and left while charging in toward the Colorless Little Girl.
And they did so while jumping between the jungle gym arrangement of pillars supporting the Ferris wheel.
The Artificial Sacred Ground was generally a 20m cube.
So with each steel beam destroyed, the entire Artificial Sacred Ground shifted over. The Ferris wheel’s weight was distributed over a great many steel beams that intersected in a complex pattern, so it would not immediately collapse when a few of its supports were cut through.
“Where to? Where to next? Where can I jump to protect her?”
The Little Girl’s side seemed to be realizing the teleportation interference was not working. But they could not shake the temptation of shifting the field to escape the immediate damage.
Natsuginu was desperate to protect her child.
That would be why she caught on so quickly.
In the brightly lit city of Toy Dream 35, a modified China dress beauty and a white liger were waiting on a giant bridge and the roof of a relatively short building.
They were vessels.
Moving to any of those areas would only give Kyousuke more power.
It likely still was not possible for him, but she could not ignore the fact that she had seen Kyousuke’s vessel shift from Meinokawa Aoi to Murasame Kuina.
“In that case!!”
Buzz!!
They were somewhere indoors.
It was a hemispherical underwater tunnel made of clear acrylic.
A giant manta slowly passed by over their heads. This was the Poolarium, a combination of a pool and an aquarium.
As soon as his feet contacted the cold floor, a rumbling shook Kyousuke’s eardrums.
The Colorless Little Girl had used the slight shift in position to easily dodge the White Queen’s fingers and land a cross-counter.
“Got her!!”
<No, mother. Not yet.>

With a click of her tongue, some of the White Queen's clothing was blasted backwards like she was brushing the powder snow off the fur covering her shoulders. She had gathered the impact there and had the clothing destroy itself in her place. Her soft skin was exposed to the air, but she did not seem to care about how much she had left in stock.
Also.
The White Queen's slender arms were a far greater trump card than any other weapon.
"Die…already!!"
Her right hand flew toward her rude opponent as a slap.
The rumbling attack did not slice whitely through space itself or gather the air around her, so it was meant to stun rather than kill. Whether it hit or was blocked, its point was to hold her opponent in place for a moment. She could deal with them as she pleased afterwards.
However.
The Colorless Little Girl let one of her giant tomes devour the bookmark she held.
The end of the world that burst out of the book consumed the stunning wind. And that attack was not aimed directly at the White Queen. It was a surprise feint, like a soccer player looking the other way before making a pass. It instead crushed the Gray Mollusk who contained Kuina. The attack was green, pink, black, and orange. It was a torrent of killer mold that had gained the ultimate resistance after exposure to so many pesticides.
They were somewhat lucky this was an airtight tunnel made of thick acrylic.
"You idiot!" shouted the White Queen. "As much as I hate it, aren't you supposed to be using that to fight for brother!?"
But the twintailed-girl may have made a mistake by focusing elsewhere no matter how briefly.
One of the 12 books behind the Colorless Little Girl opened like a great maw and directly bit at the White Queen. It was like a giant shark swallowing its prey whole.
"Mary!? Damn! Kuina, let's deal with this one thing at a time!! What's your situation!?"
<Gbh!! Promise me you won't make Sayuri do anything like this!!>
A mechanical sound burst throughout the entire underwater tunnel.
The Colorless Little Girl pouted her lips.
<Nii-sama is up to something again.>
"He can only have so many tricks. We just have to push through by force!!"
Shiroyama Natsuginu was not exactly wrong.
Murasame Kuina was only human, so she could not pull off her head like Aoi could. But if the logic existed, there was a way of using it.
It was time to show off the skill of Azalea Magentarain, who had stolen the Joruri Text from Houbi Village and tried to create a Queen lookalike out of Repliglass.

That weapon designer, who supported the global arms manufacturer of Quad Motors, had said the following over an online channel while wearing a swimsuit and lounging in a beach chair.
“If what you saw is accurate, the Blood-Sign system rules can be confused by the location and number of primary organs, right? In that case, we should be able to intentionally trigger a malfunction in the rules by introducing some mechanical products.”
And so Murasame Kuina held a fist-sized mass to her stomach.
It was an artificial heart made using silicon stem cells. Activating that was enough to cause some confusion similar to when Meinokawa Aoi had removed her head from her body.
Kyousuke did not have time for any extraneous emotions here.
He was using an oversight in the official rules. It was as crude a method as hacking into a target at the moment the area recovered from a widescale blackout. If he missed this momentary opportunity, this tightrope walk would come to an end.
(This is Coordinate F-93. That means…!!)
“Himekawa Mika, switch!!”
It happened too late.
Buzz!!
There was a roar.
They were thrown to the side of the freefall tower as if by teleportation.
But the Little Girl could not keep up.
Kyousuke had already switched to another vessel.
So…
<Please don’t forget that you promised to give me a nice long chat with the real *sensei*. And not during a crisis like this.>
The vessel who looked identical to the ponytailed researcher took over the contract and summoned a different Unexplored-class.
Unexplored-class. Cost: 18. Sound Range: Middle.
The “Dry Grass Colored” Dancer who Returns Twice the Roaring Flames (zb – ei – sd – wp – e – be – xu – a – kk – pl).
However, she could not just focus on what was in front of her.
A dull thud exploded out.
An attack from the side had struck the Colorless Little Girl in her young temple.
It had come from outside the 20m cube of the Artificial Sacred Ground. Two people were glaring her way from the large balcony sticking out from a building there. No, it was a beer garden after hours.
One was Biondetta.
The other was Shigara Masami, who looked just like Himekawa Mika.
Materials could not leave the Artificial Sacred Ground, but their projectile attacks like javelins or lightning strikes were not bound by that.
So.

If someone else had set up a different Artificial Sacred Ground and fought each other to build up their Materials, they could then make a surprise sniper attack using an Unexplored-class.
In this case, Unexplored-class. Cost: 14. Sound Range: High.
The “Gold” Harlot who Serves the Killer Boxes (hs – a – te – ei – yw – az – a – hq).
She was a blonde woman in a skimpy dress that was adorned with so many jewels it actually looked cheap. She and the treasure chests and moneybags at her feet normally functioned as a single giant trap, but she was not going to just wait around because her opponent did not approach her. The golden woman standing in the beer garden used her bare feet to kick the many dangerous treasures like soccer balls to fire them as projectiles that pierced right through the mobile home style kitchen area like it was made of cardboard.
The corner on the bottom of a heavy treasure chest had struck the Colorless Little Girl in the temple.
“Argh. I’ve been acting as your bait this whole time to build up your Material, so make yourself useful, Freedom Award 3000!!”
<Of course, Detta-chan. That was one clean hit!! Time for some more!!>
<Nii-sama!?>
But Shigara Masami was not the only one capable of making these long-range attacks. If the Colorless Little Girl pulled a hunting rifle from the weapons surrounding her like a skirt, she might blow that group away along with the very space around them.
But Kyousuke would not allow it.
“Mika!!”
<That’s Mika-*san*, you damn kid!!>
Now it was the Dry Grass Colored Dancer from the same Artificial Sacred Ground who stepped forward.
Shiroyama Natsuginu muttered to herself with her daughter residing in her body.
“I can’t let her be under attack from close and long range at the same time. We need to move elsewhere.”
Buzz!!
They were on some building’s rooftop again.
But this one appeared to be a launch pad for filming drones.
Special authorization symbols were written on the floor. The design was similar to helipads, but they were a lot smaller and it looked like a honeycomb pattern.
And the battle was still underway. Kyousuke’s mother seemed to fear Shigara Masami’s sniping, but that distracted her from Kyousuke and Mika’s Material right in front of her.
He used this chance to charge forward.
The Colorless Little Girl could kill her enemy with a full-power clean hit, but that would not end the battle. When an Unexplored-class charged forward

while canceling out the damage and ignoring the knockback, she could not prevent it from getting close.
<Nii-sama!!>
She was not about to use ordinary methods at this point.
The Little Girl slashed her large bookmark directly at the Dry Grass Colored Dancer's neck like it was a sword and swung around a giant old tome like it was a drawing board.
The Dry Grass Colored Dancer dodged that attack just once before being annihilated.
She was all about counterattacks. Every step in her alluring dance sent out dried grass and flowers that ignited from the friction and swallowed up the Colorless Little Girl like a great deluge.
"Kyou…sukeeee!!"
In that moment, his mother rose to the surface over his sister. It was hard to say how they were experiencing this, but it was possible Natsuginu was facing the actual realistic problem more than his sister who was solely focused on protecting her brother.
An internal explosion sent flames bursting from the Little Girl.
But someone else chose exactly that moment to send a slender arm toward her from a different angle. Their fingers slashed rather than struck and the old tome the Little Girl used to shield herself was shredded like soft underwear.
"In that case…"
First the slender arm and then the White Queen herself burst from within.
"I did not even need to build up the power to shred you from the inside out. What a waste of time!!"
When she shook herself like a wet cat, fist-sized balls of pink or green fluff splattered across the rooftop drone launch pad. Those things looked fancy, but this was no laughing matter when you remembered they were masses of world-destroying mold.
The White Queen could apparently take some of the damage done to her and place it on the Sword of Truth battle costume instead, but the chest and hips of that costume were falling apart. It barely looked like actual clothing anymore.
<I'm sorry, but I can't manage another attack!!>
"Understood. Sekurtiti, switch!!"
Unexplored-class. Cost: 21. Sound Range: Middle.
The "Ashen" Shrine Maiden who Invites Merciful and Dignified Death (em – ao – lev – ck – rol – ei – vb – yu – a – ps).
That petrification expert perfectly combined flowing feminine curves and the cold hardness of rock. She launched harmful curses using countless methods: her nails, her fangs, her gaze, her hair, her scream, etc.
<Do not think about preserving me. I will throw everything into a single attack. Think of me as expendable!!>
"Sorry about this!! You're up next, Isabelle!! Get ready!!"

Unexplored-class. Cost: 17. Sound Range: High.
The Liquefying Predator who Covers All With “Rainbow Colors” (hb – e – wuz – vc – a – weq – ei – lvz).
A dull but loud thud followed.
She was a liquid woman who glowed like a rainbow.
From head to toe, she was actually a special digestive fluid.
But before Isabelle could launch her first attack, the Colorless Little Girl’s attack pierced the center of her chest. And it seriously was done with a giant drill.
<What!? You promised you would take super-sized good care of me…>
He had to harden his heart.
It pained him so much he felt like he was going to cough up blood as he raised his voice again.
“Meinokawa Higan, switch!!”
<!?>
There was definite fear and panic coming from the Little Girl.
There was no end to it.
This was starting to rattle even that abnormal Unexplored-class.
Buzz!!
It must have been a split-second decision.
The scenery jumped.
They were now on a reverse bungee launch pad in Toy Dream 35.
In other words, they were at the edge of the grounds to a certain high school supported by a giant float.
If the summoner was separated from the waiting vessels, he could no longer cycle through new contracts.
That logic was sound.
But he had efficiently distributed the vessel girls around Toy Dream 35.
That meant he had not had enough people to leave more than one in a single location. Once he played the card he had, it was over.
So…
“I was bluffing.”
“What, no!”
“Mom, it seems you’re not very good at that side of things. I’m glad I finally found a cute flaw in you. I imagine this is how a guy as awful as dad caught you. Will it be Sinceria next? Or maybe Librarian-chan? I don’t care where you try to run, but don’t forget I have vessels everywhere!!”
Meinokawa Higan had not been there.
If the Little Girl and his mother had not panicked and had stayed on the rooftop drone launch pad, he could not have passed the baton to another vessel.
The Colorless Little Girl had unnecessarily guided him to his next supply.
So he could reach them.
He could pass the baton of possible victory to the next vessel.
“Olivia Highland, switch!!”

<Okay, Onii-chan. It's the star's time to shine!!>
Unexplored-class. Cost: 20. Sound Range: Low.
The "Red-Eyed" Lady who Sees Through all Sin and Calamity (fa – ao – ab – ei – fj – cib – b – du – a – eif).
A red female oni had two horns parting the bangs of her long black hair. She was alluringly dressed in a combination of a kimono left open and a one-piece swimsuit, her eyes were gently shut, and she kept a calm and graceful expression on her face. The many gears behind her represented the world's destiny. She was the ruler of prophesies of unparalleled accuracy and it was rumored the opening of her eyes would not just see the future but determine it.
Kyousuke had pulled off a result beyond what simple skill could have accomplished.
This was a school.
His young sister had never been old enough to attend one of those and she spoke in a frail voice now.
<Nii-sama.>
"Then I will not even bother trying to think this out, Kyousuke. If thinking means falling for bluffs, then I will simply crush you by brute force!!"
In order to push away the enemy right in front of her, the Colorless Little Girl had a long bookmark eaten by a book behind her.
But the Red Lady parted her alluring red lips with her eyes still shut.
She whispered in a voice other than Olivia's.
Her words were an accurate prophecy.
<Queen, swing your left hand horizontally. That will overturn this.>
With the dry sound of bursting air, the giant tome prepared to spew out an end of the world in a muddy torrent, but the prophecy came true before it could.
It was overturned in the air, altering its aim.
<Ah.>
The Colorless Little Girl's jaw dropped.
A gross sound reminiscent of sewage flowing back up the drain reverberated across the nighttime school and that apocalypse attacked its own master. It was the endless mountain of trash that could have piled up and piled up and piled up until it buried everything and brought an end to the human race. It sprayed out like water pressurized to the point of gaining a cutting edge and it slammed into that young body.
Finally, they got a clean hit on her.
"We can win this!" roared the White Queen.
The Little Girl could not get away from the Queen and the Unexplored-class approaching her. She was *only* a Queen killer, so she would be overwhelmed in a two-against-one rush.
She could not change this without falling back and starting fresh, but she could not fall back until she changed this.
She was trapped in a catch-22.

“Now we can win this!! The scales have tilted in our favor. Even if we can’t get a critical hit in now, the Colorless Little Girl can’t recover from this!!”
<No.>
It was like a splash of cold water.
The Red Lady’s eyes had cracked open at some point.
<Queen, you still cannot win like this. No matter what.>
A moment later, a dangerous light filled the Colorless Little Girl’s eyes visible through the muddy torrent swallowing her up.
“This is not over yet.”
She spoke with a woman’s voice much too low to come from such a small girl.
Yes.
After a deep bursting sound, the speargun the Little Girl held pierced the White Queen’s chest.
It was a clean hit.
That muddy torrent had acted as a curtain and the relief of getting a hit in had created a psychological opening.
The speargun was one of the many weapons surrounding her like a dress skirt.
There were many types of spearguns, but this one was a rifle-style weapon made by taking a rubber band gun made with chopsticks, remaking it with a lightweight aluminum frame, and increasing the size and destructive power. But since this was one of the Colorless Little Girl’s weapons, it had to be more than just that. The trident it fired had to carry even more destructive power than that symbol of Poseidon would suggest.
And unlike the ordinary Unexplored-classes that Kyousuke could switch between endlessly, there was just one of the White Queen. Since her strength never changed, she was always the strongest, but there were no surprises there either. Also, the Colorless Little Girl was a Queen killer. She might have some trouble with the other Unexplored-classes, but she could kill the White Queen instantly.
Almost all of the White Queen’s clothing burst away with a sound like a balloon popping.
But it was too little too late.
The girl’s own body was pierced before the clothing could shoulder the damage.
Although the Sword of Truth battle costume’s crazy high specs could be seen in the fact that it prevented the attack from killing her instantly.
“Gh…”
She coughed up blood.
A metal spear thicker than her thumb had mercilessly pierced the Queen from front to back. The barb at the tip had sharply caught at her. The center of her chest was her Silhouette. The core supporting her presence in this world had been entirely destroyed.
She could not last.

She could not stay here.
“I am sorry…ghh. Brother. I can’t-…!!”
Shigara Masami’s Box could only do so much to support her.
Her silhouette blurred, she came apart into countless particles, and she vanished from the dark school.

Part 4

Wisdom had never been interested in the outcome of that battle while she floated in the other world.
She looked white because she had wanted to match the Queen.
Because she did not want any distance between them when they were together.
Instead of tying her long silver hair in twintails on the sides of her head, she tied them at the bottom of her head so they would not get in her way.
She was not wearing any kind of clothing.
Instead, she had cables wrapped around her body again and again like thick belts and those cables dragged around keypads, card readers, padlocks, magnetic lock keyholes, the glass panels for fingerprint reading, and eye-scanning scopes that resembled microscopes.
She created a safety system.
If the innocent baby bird harmed no one, there was no risk of anyone harming the innocent baby bird. If she only hid behind someone's back and tugged at their skirt while peering out at the outside world, she could live a life free of earned troubles.
That was the entire reason Wisdom existed.
So there was only one answer.
She would once more feed the White Queen the food of words. She would narrow the world she saw. She would free her from all advantage and harm to reset her outlook. Wisdom had caused this. Her overprotectiveness had left the White Queen too naïve and then she had foolishly let her contact the outside world. So this time, she would lock everything down.
She would keep her where she belonged.
So Wisdom felt no guilt over what she was doing.
Even if she had led the White Queen to kill young Kyousuke's sister before his eyes and even if she was now killing the White Queen in that world to bring her back to this one.
She wanted to scan all words and letters the White Queen would consume and sing a lullaby that would safely determine even what the White Queen dreamed of.
She wanted to be the overprotective big sister.
Even if it meant having that twintailed-girl temporarily dirty her hands and cry.

She would apply as many locks as there were stars in the sky and thoroughly manage everything herself.
“What a pain.”
She heard an exasperated sigh.
And with those words, the world expanded around *her*. By placing her feet down, the concept of land came into being and the endlessly expanse of the sky appeared as its opposite.
The “White” Queen who Wields the Sword of Unsullied Truth (iu – nu – fb – a – wuh – ei –kx – eu – pl – vjz).
Everything transformed around this girl whose silver twintails swayed, but this was not a privilege exclusive to the Queen. Unlike the human world, this world looked different to everyone who viewed it. For example, what heaven or hell looked like was not consistent between religions and mythologies. So if 100 people were standing here, 100 different worlds would exist around them. The Red Lady had her version of this world and the Wicked Green Lady had hers. They all wandered within their own viewpoint.
They all existed in the same space, but they could never be connected.
They could have anything they wanted, but they could never share it with anyone.
It was like everyone was wearing VR goggles and playing their own individual games. The players did not care what things were like outside their goggles, so they would not even know they were in the same space unless they bumped into each other.
“Isn’t that the kind of beings we are? The strength of our power isolates us, so when we cannot bare the loneliness any longer, we descend to the human world in search of someone. We long for the voices of all those people. You may not be able to do that, but trying to fulfill that desire in this world is still a problem. I have a world I can lose myself in, so please do not remove the goggles from my face.”
That had happened in the past.
The other Unexplored-classes had so feared her power that they had worked together to attack her. That could be seen as pulling the goggles from her eyes while she played and starting a fistfight in this vast space. Of course, the Queen had been so angry she defeated every last one of them and ended up unifying the rules of the game for better or for worse.
As a safety system, that was the height of folly.
Why would you challenge the omnipotent White Queen using strength?
In this world of isolation, the Queen had the exceptional power to connect each individual’s world and intrude on them.
That was why she could speak with the omniscient Wisdom now.
Wisdom had long silver twintails similar yet different to the White Queen’s. That exceedingly odd Unexplored-class’s radiant nudity was covered by belt-like cables and a variety of locks including keypads and padlocks, but not everyone could see her like that.

“_________”
Wisdom’s words compressed their data so much that they sounded like a combination of simple tones to ordinary people, so it would have been reminiscent of Morse code or a fax signal. But if you forcibly replayed the memory in slow motion and broke it down, it became this:
“rx – ht – iu – nu – fb – a – wuh – ei – kx – eu – pl – vjz. qe – i – rx – weq – qo – a – lm – u – rx – iu – wi? weq – a – bh – rg – i – jd – ou – pms – u – eu – lw – vg – mpe – iu.”
But trying to transcribe it all would be an endless task.
At any rate.
Seeing someone else’s silhouette was enough of a miracle in this world.
But the White Queen could see her face and hear her voice.
She could gaze upon the radiant and nearly nude body of Wisdom.
That may have been why she was known as the omnipotence to match Wisdom’s omniscience.
The White Queen herself sounded exasperated.
“Did you hope that killing me and closing me up in this world would allow you to feed me your words once more and get me to rest my head and sleep on your lap like you are my big sister or something?”
“_______”
“That is nothing to be embarrassed about, but it is annoying. Also, that will not be happening. Brother’s fight is not yet over.”
Wisdom seemed confused by the White Queen’s confident tone.
She tilted her head and her silver twintails shook somewhat.
Wisdom honestly had no interested in the human world.
If Shiroyama Kyousuke seduced the Queen and took her beyond Wisdom’s reach in that world, then she would do everything she could to stop it, but none of it mattered once the Queen was back here. Because no matter how much Kyousuke struggled and no matter what the result of his battle against the Colorless Little Girl, he could never take back the White Queen.
Wisdom no longer cared about the Colorless Little Girl or Kyousuke’s mother for the same reason.
Nothing that happened in the human world could reach them here now.
No one could contact the White Queen anymore.
Wisdom would apply as many locks as there were stars in the sky so no one else’s words would ring in her ears again. She would scan and break down all letters and words given to her. Her lullaby would even control the dreams that girl had when she shut her eyes.
The worship of the humans in their world and the fear of the beings in this world were no longer necessary.
Wisdom would interfere with the White Queen and keep away anyone who would harm that ignorant girl.
However.
The White Queen smiled and said more.
“By the way, why do you think I returned to this world?”

“_____”
“It was not to open my mouth like a baby bird so you could feed me your words. Why would you think that, you imbecile?”
She really was exasperated now.
The White Queen was passionate enough to lose control. And Wisdom had to know that since she felt the need to apply locks to keep her safe. If Wisdom had not known that from the beginning, she never would have used her bluffing skills on her.
“It is true brother and the others in the human world cannot reach this world no matter how hard they try. They can summon things from here, but they cannot come here themselves. The one exception is earning 1000 Awards and becoming a resident of this world, but brother has not reached that level.”
The Red Lady had prophesied that they could never defeat Wisdom.
But so what?
The Queen was not going to back down because of a prophecy made in the miniscule framework of a silly fight in the human world.
She winked and raised a finger.
“*But what if someone helps him from this side?* Ever heard of someone being ‘spirited away’ by a god? If someone on this side acts as a powerful anchor, it is entirely possible for a human to intrude on this territory while supported by their own lifeline. Even the sturdiest castle gate is useless if someone opens it from the inside.”
It had to be possible.
Summoning was a technique to travel between worlds.
And who had ever said it only worked in the one direction? If there was a way to summon residents of this world to the human world, it was only logical for there to be a way to summon residents of the human world to this world.
Something fell to the ground with a heavy thud.
It was decorated with something like pure white ribbons or wings.
No, it was long hair much like the White Queen’s but not worn in twintails.
This was an artificial object made of an entirely different substance.
It was the head of the artificial vessel named Meinokawa Aoi.
Aoi had supposedly left the stage after removing her head back in the early stages of the battle. But what if a team made up of Sinceria and Rachel had collected it and passed it around to the different vessels so it was ultimately returned to the Artificial Sacred Ground and secretly given the White Queen?
“I can’t believe this. How did I end up being the first and the last trump card in this fight? Although I suppose this is better than living in a wasteful society of single-use products.”
And.
If the vessel to contain a Material was here…

“You did this yourself, didn’t you? You had the Colorless Little Girl wield a Blood-Sign to gather the Petals.”
With a swishing sound, the White Queen was suddenly holding a long stick just like her beloved always did.
“Shi – Ro – Ya – Ma – Kyo – U – Su – Ke. Hee hee. Looking at it like this, spelling out his name character by character is kind of embarrassing.”
“––––––!?”
The twintailed girl smiled and dropped something else at her feet.
On that signal, history was forever changed.
It was a metal cylinder the size of a hair spray can, but it did not contain the same substance as Kyousuke’s.
“It was brother who prepared for all this from the beginning☆”
The grenade burst and a certain boy crossed the boundaries between worlds to appear there.

Part 5

Everything had changed.
Kyousuke had no idea what kind of world it really was, but for a human like him who could not contact it properly, it was a horribly empty space. It was endlessly vast, but had nothing in it. It was a flat surface covered in evenly-spaced intersecting lines like graph paper. A greenscreen studio taking up an entire planet may have been the closest comparison.
The world changed depending on your viewpoint, so daily training was important.
That was a Buddhist philosophy, but this was probably different from what Buddhism meant.
There was a roar of wind.
A slap from an Unexplored-class could easily take off a human head.
But that was no what happened.
In fact, Kyousuke did nothing at all, yet Wisdom's raised hand was deflected and she staggered back a few steps.
She gnashed her teeth in an expression of rage.
Her anger went full circle and brought tears to her eyes.
Her long silver hair swam through the air. She was no more than a girl with cables wrapped like belts around her radiant nudity. The clattering sound when she moved came from the keypads, padlocks, and other locks that checked the palmprint or iris of the eye. She must have never expected anyone but the White Queen to see her because she belatedly bent over and tried to cover her chest and hips with her hands.
Having her soft skin so casually seen was like having your love letter made public when it was meant for just one person in the whole world.
There was thorough anger and embarrassment on her face.
"–––––!! ––––!? ––––. ––––––––––––––––. ––––––––. ––––! ––––––––––––!! ––––. ––––––––!! ––––. ––––––––––––!? ––––––––––––!! ––––––––––––!!!???"
Wisdom sent out a frightening amount of information.
Direct physical strength was not the only cause of death. A normal person's brain might have been destroyed.
But Kyousuke did not die.
The White Queen softly wrapped her slender arms around his head, held it to her chest, and eliminated all that excess noise.
He knew what Wisdom was trying to say.

This had always been the final hurdle since Wisdom's cruelty had become apparent.
"No matter what kind of compromise I make, it won't change the fact that the Queen killed my sister. So you're saying I should let you control her as a safety system?"
That was all he said.
She might have used a sea of letters vast enough to drown an entire planet, but Kyousuke had no obligation to worry about Wisdom's feelings. He just had to quote mine as maliciously as an aggregation site and accept just the crux of the issue.
"That's why I'm here. To be honest, fighting my sister and mom in my world wasn't going to solve anything. …Defeating both of them *wasn't going to harm you in any way while you hide in this world.* So I'm not going to follow your rules. You set everything up to serve your own ends and even prepared an escape route to avoid any harm if you lost. So tell me this: what do we gain by accepting your cheap cowardly views?"

“–––––––!!”
He was afflicted by a headache so intense he thought his skull was going to split open.
Her twintails floated up like they were filling with static electricity.
Ominous sparks flew from the keypads and padlocks covering her nudity.
The White Queen held Kyousuke’s head all the tighter.
She knew doing so would only enrage Wisdom further, so it felt like she was intentionally showing it off.
“I have two demands,” said the summoner with his head held to that soft chest. “First, the utter defeat of you, Wisdom, as the ultimate cause of all this. And second, saving my sister who you defined as unsavable. I will not back down on either of those.”
Wisdom was not even shouting anymore.
His demands were so absurd that her mind may have gone blank.
Even her expression had frozen in place.
Kyousuke grinned as he continued.
Only his voice echoed across that unique world with a graph paper grid.
“This isn’t just a pipe dream. It’s true there is no way of resurrecting someone directly killed by the White Queen even if you alter the laws of the world or travel back in time or to a parallel world. That’s the rule.”
“…”
“But that rule *only applies to the world I lived in*. The rules in this world are different. It might be possible here to perform a ceremony to resurrect my dead sister!!”
Shiroyama Kyousuke alone could never have accomplished it. Nor could the White Queen alone.
But they were not alone now.
The time had come for human and Material to work together.
“This will remove the original grudge. This will save my sister the Queen killed.”
It would not bring back all the dead.
For example, it would not bring back everyone who had died at the Queen’s Miniature Garden.
But they could at least erase the first murder. They could eliminate the murder that the Queen had unintentionally committed as Wisdom whispered in her ear.
“And I have to thank you for one thing, Wisdom. You’re such a godawful Unexplored-class it makes me want to vomit, but you do have my gratitude for resurrecting my mom. Mock me and say I have a juvenile sister complex and Oedipus complex if you like. I have zero intention of ever reconciling with Doctor S, but *now I have my whole family back.*.”
“––––––––––!!”
The solid barrier was going to crumble.
Once that wall of guilt was gone, nothing would remain to restrain the White Queen. The entire concept of a safety system and locks would fall

apart. As before, the entire world would drown in her charisma or throw stones at her out of a sense of justice. But now Wisdom could no longer intercept all those words, break them down into a convenient form, and provide that to the White Queen.
Various items fell from Kyousuke's hoodie, pants, and their pockets to reach the ground in that essentially empty world. Theses were impurities created in the human world. They crudely disturbed the precise and orderly image of this grid-covered world.
Then Kyousuke breathed a soft sigh.
"So I really could bring my tools with me. Well, I was guessing as much since the Unexplored-classes don't appear naked when you summon them."
"My, my, brother. If that is what you are into, then should I wake you up like that tomorrow morning?"
He could build something if he had tools to work with.
You must not forget. Azalea and Benikomichi Fuuki were not the only ones to break down the Blood-Sign system and construct a master plan. The person who had found success with the world's greatest experiment was Shiroyama Kyousuke who carried Doctor S's blood and had studied under Shigara Masami.
Plus, no experiment had ever been on a larger scale than the creation of the Colorless Little Girl.
It was not Pandemonium or the Founder's Gallery that mattered. Shiroyama Kyousuke's presence was all that was needed to create a fearsome laboratory.
But what was this?
Wisdom was filled with questions.
She silently tilted her head.
The apple spoken of in Norse mythology, the philosopher's stone used for alchemy, the ambrosia of Greek mythology, the trip to the underworld attempted by Orpheus, the mummification process taken from Egyptian mythology, etc. She used every piece of knowledge she had before her intellectual work came to a sudden halt.
"Wisdom."
"…"
"Since you go by that name, surely you really do understand there is a loophole in the rules governing death. That's why you so desperately wanted to hide it. To keep Mary from escaping you."
"!!!???"

Part 6

And a miracle occurred.

Part 7

It was likely already over at that point.
The Colorless Little Girl would have vanished back in the human world.
That unique Unexplored-class's core part had been removed.
Because that girl no longer existed as a dead ghost.
Shiroyama Natsuginu could not continue the fight all on her own.
She may have been able to break the rules like the Rainy Girl, but this was a more fundamental issue. Now that her daughter had been saved, she had lost her justification to maintain her anger and grudge as a mother.
She could only return from being an avenger to being an ordinary mother.
Wisdom could not act as a safety system for the White Queen. She could not act as a contact point for all words and she could not unilaterally narrow the Queen's view of the world. She had no interest in the world at large, so all her despair was probably focused on that one point.
Her shoulders trembled in that world lined as accurately as graph paper.
The keypads and palmprint pads clattered unnaturally as she shook.
Omniscient Wisdom did not seem to have any direct power to fight.
One instruction to the omnipotent White Queen would bring this to a swift end.
"Wisdom."
The girl's shoulders jumped at Kyousuke's voice.
She must have known that backing away now would accomplish nothing.
When it came to pure physical strength, she was not just weaker than the other Unexplored-classes but weaker than the weakest Regulation-class. If Kyousuke threw a slap, it would be her who was knocked back.
So.
She could only accept his words.
"I promise you I will not let this end with the Fourth Summoning Ceremony. I only created that to settle things between the Queen and me, so it isn't necessary anymore."
"–––?"
Those words actually brought Wisdom to a stop. The look on her face said that even a collection of knowledge like her had not expected this.
Kyousuke continued regardless.
"I will create the Fifth Summoning Ceremony…no, I will destroy the very framework of summoning and create a new age. Just like the age of the

dinosaurs ended because the power of individuals was not enough to build up a civilization.”
It would take a single stab.
That would end it all.
He had to settle this. There was no changing that.
“I swear I will pass you the baton in the next age. I will tear down the boundary between the two worlds and eliminate the need for the inconvenient Blood-Sign system. So I won’t doom you to an eternity of loneliness. That’s what I’m trying to say.”
“Brother…”
“I won’t let you act as a safety device or an addition to the White Queen. You don’t have to define yourself as no more than her pair. Wisdom, create your own life. You can meet the Queen again once you do that.”
The White Queen held out the object in her hands: a Blood-Sign.
It was a powerless club against an Unexplored-class who could shrug off bullets and bombs, but things were different for Wisdom who lacked the direct ability to fight.
Everyone made mistakes.
If people were never given a second chance, then Kyousuke and the Queen would not been worthy of reaching for happiness. Wisdom had maliciously attacked young Kyousuke and his sister, but without that, he would have been killed without ever escaping Doctor S’s clutches.
It was thanks to her that they had finally found victory here.
So there was one more thing that needed saying.
“Wisdom.”
He did not expect an answer.
That was fine.
He would hear an answer someday even if he did not force one here.
He was sure of it.
So Shiroyama Kyousuke spoke while readying his Blood-Sign to end it all.
“No one needs to be the strongest. Let’s meet again once the playing field has been leveled.”

Facts

- Shiroyama Kyousuke defeated Wisdom.
- But he stayed true to the ideals of Alice (with) Rabbit to the end.
- If he had stayed with the Fourth Summoning Ceremony, he could have acquired everything in both worlds, but he refused to settle things by abandoning a life and is instead advancing to an even higher stage.

Kssshh ksh ksh ksssssshhhh!! Beeeeeeeeeeeeeep

- An unexpected error has occurred.
- The Fourth Summoning Ceremony will soon come to an end.

Ending X-01: Who Sits in the Queen’s Throne?

“Hi.”
“The second term, huh? Give me a break. Why can’t summer vacation last forever?”
(Ending X-01 Open 09/01 07:30)
Who Sits in the Queen’s Throne?

A monotone beeping repeated within a dimly-lit cruiser.
A phone’s alarm was going off.
But before sleepy Kyousuke could reach from the double bed to the bedside table, another small hand touched the 5-inch LCD screen. One fingertip stopped the alarm and then the arm flopped back down.
…It had come from below Kyousuke’s blanket. Someone else was lying across his body so they drew a cross together.
“What are you doing?”
He yawned and pulled up the blanket.
A small girl who looked about 10 was lying face down across his stomach.
“Nii-sama,” said the girl while ignoring the long hair covering her face.
This was a physical voice, not one that rang directly in his mind.
Her body was not translucent.
She tossed and turned a lot more than he remembered. She had rolled all over the bed throughout the night, so a few buttons of her baggy dress shirt had come undone, her slender shoulders were sticking out, and her hair must have gotten caught between her head and the bed because it was a mess.
“I should really buy you some proper pajamas.”
“No. I like yours, Nii-sama. A high school shirt has a grownup smell.”
He initially placed a hand on her small head, but patting her head was not going to fix that hair. Instead, he got up from the bed, held his sister to his chest, and combed from the top of her head to the back of her head and on down her back to fix it.
“That tickles, Nii-sama.”
“Stay still. Please just stay like that a while longer.”
“Okay, if you say so.”

She smiled and buried her face in his chest.
Her body had definite weight and heat to it, so this was not an illusion. When he held her close, he could feel the breathing and heartbeat of a living person.
His sister had really only been around 4 when she was killed, but being built into the Colorless Little Girl must have had a lasting effect. The apparent age of her physical body had grown a little bit.
“Don’t you have school today too?”
“Yeah. It’s my first day of elementary school!”
She looked up from her brother’s chest with a big smile on her face.
That was a look he had never seen in that small house, but it seemed like the look she was meant to have.
She had grown too much to fit in at preschool or kindergarten and she was enough of a genius to survive Doctor S’s education.
So what was the best way to help her live like a normal person?
After some discussion with his mother, they had decided to go with the age she looked. Of course, test scores were not the only purpose of school, so Kyousuke and his mother would have to do some work outside school to make sure she developed her social skills and made friends appropriately.
(I guess that’s something I have to work on too.)
Since he had only needed to live in the world of the Summoning Ceremony, he had previously decided friendships and other relationships were not really necessary. He had had the power to fight, so he had used that as an excuse to face society on those terms. But that path was no longer available to him.
That age had ended.
With all his Awards removed, he would no longer vanish from normal people’s memories and awareness.
He could no longer take the easy way out.
He walked from the cabin to the kitchen and heard the sizzling of oil in a heated frying pan.
An older woman with her chestnut hair tied back behind her head was wearing an apron and cooking enough food for everyone.
“A boat’s stove is just not powerful enough. Plus, it’s cramped and it rocks in the waves! Look at this, Kyousuke. I was trying to make a half-boiled omelet, but it ended up as scrambled eggs! I haven’t screwed up this badly since elementary school cooking class!!”
“Elementary school!!”
His sister’s face lit up as she approached the table in that baggy dress shirt.
Their mother childishly pouted her lips.
“Honestly, you’re happy with anything as long as it’s drenched in ketchup. I’m not sure how to feel about that…”
The small girl did not seem to mind, though.
Kyousuke started to sit at the same table, but she slapped a chair and spoke to him.

“No, Nii-sama. Sit here.”
“I thought that was your chair.”
“I’ll sit in your lap and eat. That’s my special seat! But if you ask nicely, I might lend it to you sometimes, mother.”
There was no talking her out of it once she set her mind to it, so obeying her was the best option in the mornings when they had somewhere to be.
Kyousuke placed his small sister on his lap, but then he frowned.
“Hold on. What happened to your underwear?”
“It’s uncomfortable and keeps me awake.”
In that case, he might find it balled up under the covers somewhere.
Natsuginu looked all the more exasperated.
“Hey, Kyousuke? I won’t insist on anything as fancy as Aika-san’s high-rise apartment, but how about we rent a proper room? I can work part-time as a cashier if need be.”
“What’s wrong with the cruiser?”
“It’s too small for four people.”
That reminded him that one person was missing.
He still looked sleepy, so his mother continued with a finger on her own cheek.
“There must have been some formalities she has to deal with because she already left. And she was not happy that kissing you here did not wake you. I recommend having a small gift ready to make sure you don’t get struck by lightning when you see her again. It’s a little late to make a full bento, so maybe some iced tea in a water bottle.”
“…”
She did that? thought Kyousuke while briefly falling silent, but the sister on his lap leaned back against him. She kicked her legs below the table while speaking to him.
“Nii-sama, I like your boat, but the bath is too small. Even though you said it was a custom bath.”
“Not to mention the kitchen. I would really prefer something better.”
“Is it really that bad?”
Kyousuke was fine with taking showers and eating milk and cereal, but the woman in charge of the housework pointed at the egg dish she had made.
“If you want actual food to eat, yes. Honestly, what kind of kitchen trips the breaker when you use the microwave and toaster at the same time!? And what about home visits from your teachers? I don’t want to borrow Aika-san’s apartment for that. It would feel like I was deceiving them.”
At any rate, the sister eating the freshly-made breakfast had hit on the truth. It was September 1, so they could not continue acting like it was summer break. It would be best to wait until after school to discuss all this.
Even in this short time, he had discovered that his mother did not like it when he used his phone while eating. It seemed unfair that having the TV on was somehow okay. The news was showing a commotion on the level of a new global OS or smartphone going on sale.

“Quad Motors, the defense company known for its Repliglass development, has just made several announcements to the press. First of all, the internal conflicts over management of the company have come to an end and Miss Azalea, a girl of only 14, has taken the position of CEO.”
The photo displayed on the TV screen carried great meaning.
She had not been forgotten by the people around her.
“14? America is an incredible place,” said his mother. “Now I feel silly worrying about whether to send this girl to preschool or elementary school.”
“Eh? Skipping ahead is a waste. After watching Nii-sama for so long, I just know staying in school forever would be fun!”
Natsuginu confiscated her daughter’s toast before the girl could add butter, jam, *and* chocolate paste to it. Before handing it back, she made it clear that toast was only allowed two toppings in this household.
Kyousuke slowly ate his own breakfast. With his sister in his lap, he had to eat carefully so none of the crumbs got on her head.
“Hm, not as good as cereal.”
“Kyousuke.”
He heard a low voice from the person who had made the food, so he wisely chose to say nothing more.
“Quad Motors has also announced several new projects along with their new CEO,” continued the news. “The largest of the projects they plan to begin alongside their Repliglass development has only been described with the mysterious phrase ‘the non-physical service industry’. With only that and the curious tagline ‘from summoning to awakening’, it is unclear what this will entail, but Miss Azalea left the following comment on social media: ‘If big data is to trigger a new revolution in the physical industries such as Repliglass, we must turn to the spiritual industries.’ This has led some to speculate that the technology-focused company will be branching out into the fields of spiritualism and alternative medicine, so people are voicing their hopes and worries both inside and outside the United States.”
“Kyousuke.”
His mother called his name to draw his attention away from the TV.
“I will be going to her school to complete the official process there. Is that okay with you?”
“It’s a whole lot better than having my mom show up at my high school. I’m a little worried that *she* went on ahead of me, but she was a Machiavellian specialist back when she was out of control, so she can probably adlib her way out of any trouble.”
Kyousuke waved a hand dismissively, but his sister started trembling.

“H-high school. What a scary holy ground…”
“Pretty sure you’re overthinking that.”
At any rate, once they finished breakfast, it was time for school.
Kyousuke’s sister started hopping in excitement when she saw him in his ordinary summer uniform of a short-sleeved dress shirt and pants, so he had to pull her away from him before leaving the cruiser. And she could no longer wear that one-piece swimsuit or leotard covered in weapons like she had as an inhuman monster. After changing into a comfortable short-sleeved blouse and a knee-length skirt, she put on a backpack with a security buzzer on the belt.
“Nii-sama, help me with the final check. How is the security buzzer?”
“Yes, yes. Its battery is fully charged.”
“My skirt isn’t caught behind my backpack?”
“You’re fine. I can’t see your butt.”
She was probably more interested in showing off her school outfit than actually performing a check. She spun around in front of him and he sighed while playing along.
“But are you sure you wanted a red backpack? You can choose them in any color you want these days.”
“Yeah, I like this color best. It’s your color, Nii-sama!”

It sounded like something rhythmically slicing through the air.
However, this was not the sound of a propeller. The vibration of the thin roof simply made it sound a lot like that.
The schools and hospitals in rural Houbi Village did not have heliports, so the Hornet Repliglass VTOL transport plane had to land on the green grass.
It was September 1.
Meinokawa Aoi, the silver-haired shrine maiden who had been collecting morning exercise stamps along with the neighborhood kids up through yesterday, brushed back her hair with a hand.
“Mwoh, what is with all this noise so early in the morning? You’re disturbing the neighborhood.”
“My apologies, lonely woman who lost track of time and went to the public square despite September having arrived.”
“Shut up!!” she tearfully shouted, but the girl she was responding to did not seem to care.
That girl wore a customized blue tight skirt suit as she stepped out of the side cargo door. She was Azalea Magentarain. The ends of her reddish blonde hair were curled in a classy sort of way.
“Fractal.”
“Yes, milady.”
It was early morning, but the sun was already high overhead as if to declare war on everyone who wanted to stay cool, but the old butler next to Azalea still wore a black suit. He pulled out and opened a silver attaché case to

reveal the old text within. Instead of parchment, it was Japanese paper bound with thick strings.
The cover was written in a stylistic way that your average modern Japanese person would be unable to read.
That was the Joruri Text.
“I would like to return this since we no longer need it.”
“So you absorbed all of its knowledge?”
“Yes, although Shiroyama Kyousuke did most of it himself. Quad Motors simply calculated out the cost of adopting his plans.”
The Joruri Text was centuries old and Quad Motors’ Repliglass had to have just as long a history behind it.
Yet they had both been outdone so easily.
He had shaken things up at a more fundamental level than a simple artificial vessel.
He could look at the exact same texts or manuals and see something entirely different, like it was a piece of trick art.
“Astounding, isn’t it?”
“Yes, it really is. It is apparently meant to invite in that which cannot be summoned by a series of letters, but I call it the monstrous result of necessity being the mother of invention. He is the type of creator that finds a solution in mere seconds when he feels something is lacking.”
Time seemed to flow slower in Houbi Village, but the radio used for morning exercises still received the daily news. The adults often told the children to read the newspaper and watch the news, but Aoi wished they would divide the news up between that which you could show the kids and that which you could not. Far too many of the stories were too depressing.
And.
Two schoolgirls rode up on a high-tech motor-assisted bicycle with boxy backpacks on and they thoughtlessly spoke up.
“What are they doing there?”
“S-Sayuri, let’s not get involved in Government business.”
“*That category no longer exists.* Let’s hurry up and deliver this breakfast and have her special-sized pay with her phone. We can earn lots of money while completing our summer break hands-on learning project. Vroom☆”
Aoi had been the one to order the food.
The appearance of the unexpected intruder delayed the delivery process. She was sick of the usual breakfast of white rice and miso soup, so she had wanted the Greek yogurt & granola set from a popular nearby restaurant as a fashionable change of pace. However…
“Ehhhh!? You didn’t put them in separate containers, so now it’s all soggy!”
“I think you were super-sized mistaken to think that would survive the long trip over the mountain on a bicycle.”
“Okay, hold out your phone. Cha-ching, all done. …Let’s get going, Sayuri. This hands-on learning project is a valuable chance to earn some money while in middle school. Don’t look that dangerous woman in the eye!”

“W-w-wait! You expect me to eat this? Nwohhhhh, what kind of service is this!?”

For the modified China dress beauty named Lu Niang Lan, the morning made her sleepy, but she had walked to the outskirts of Toy Dream 35 anyway because she had business there.
Government Award 1000.
When she arrived on the hill where Elvast Toydream slept, she found someone already there.
“This is a problem, you know? How long is an Illegal assassin going to remain so attached to the leader of Government?”
There was a squeaking of a moving wheelchair.
The person seated in it looked like an ordinary baseball boy. The name Irigaru Tarou was of course fake. The girl holding the wheelchair’s grips behind him was wearing a bunny suit that did not fit her nervous behavior. But Lu Niang Lan’s senses told her the girl’s reluctance was feigned and she actually enjoyed this.
The boy was wearing sunglasses as straight as a ruler, but they meant something different now.
In the Summoning Ceremony, the Incense Grenade would have no effect if you could not visually designate a target. A certain rabbit had taken advantage of that by crushing his eyes and shoulders to take the entire Blood-Sign system away from him.
But even if he could no longer fight directly, he was still the top of Illegal which controlled all the world’s criminal organizations. And Lu Niang Lan knew all too well that in the underground world, the power of groups was to be feared much more than the power of individuals.
However.
Despite all that, the modified China dress beauty breathed a sigh of exasperation and lightly tapped her shoulder with the bouquet she held.
“*Now that everyone’s Awards have been taken away, no one cares about those old categories like Government and Illegal.* Those are a thing of the past, like the baby boom generation or the bubble era. Or like some old guy whose comedian name doesn’t even ring a bell.”
“True enough.”
Boy A laughed.
They no longer disappeared from ordinary people’s memories and awareness, but that was not always a good thing. It would now be a lot harder for the outlaws to avoid the police. A single hair left at the crime scene could be a fatal mistake now.
“What are you gonna do now? Do you really think this perfect happy ending applies to people like us?”
“You seem to be mistaken about something. I was not *working a second job* as an assassin because I wanted to. I came to Illegal to avoid pursuit from

Government and I helped out because I needed some way to pay my rent. Now that that isn't necessary, it's over. I can work as a legal used tool shop and that is how I prefer it."
"…"
"If you were hoping for some wonderful advice given out of a strange sense of camaraderie, then I apologize for not being a villain to the core."
With that said, the modified China dress beauty kneeled down and placed the bouquet on the modest grave that most people would entirely overlook. And she turned her back on Illegal's leader to do so. That showed just how little respect she had for Boy A, Irigaru Tarou.
"Hey," said the wheelchair boy quietly.
But who was he talking to?
Lu Niang Lan, his rival sleeping below the dirt, or the childhood friend girl supporting his wheelchair?
"I hear there's a sport you can play even when you're blind. You can follow the sound of the bell to find the ball. Do you think I could do that?"
"If that is what you want to do."

"Ugh."
Aika, the girl in a green and white striped bikini, groaned quietly. The morning sun may have been more of an enemy for this shut-in girl than for the mysterious young woman who had worked as an assassin.
She was on the top floor of her Toy Dream 35 high-rise apartment.
She would normally still be asleep while leaning against the white liger she used as a sofa, but that was not an option today.
"Liger, we need to take a shower together."
The 5m beast sprang up as if to say "Eh!? Let's not get hasty!", but there was no avoiding it now. Their Awards had been taken, but her bond with the animal remained unchanged. The white liger was more comfortable than a beanbag or balance ball, but the oily fur of a feline carnivore was a flaw. It had reached the point that a towel was not enough to get it off.
And so the two of them were soaking wet.
After much one-handed fighting with the hairdryer in the changing room, naked Aika reached for her change of clothes.
And it was not just the usual swimsuit.
It was a boy's hoodie she could wear over that.
"…"
This was the same as leaving behind a handkerchief or piece of clothing that smelled like you to keep your pet a little less worried when you were gone on a trip. Aika held that "going out" clothing for a while and stared at it until she finally put it on.
A lot of time had apparently passed while she stood there.

When she returned to the living room with the white liger who shook the excess moisture from her giant body, the phone on the glass table was vibrating. Aika grabbed it before it fell off the table and answered the call.
“I am in front of your room. Where should I wait?”
It was a short question.
That would sound like a horrific stalker if this was from some unknown person, but it was not a problem when she knew who it was.
“If a direct meeting would be too difficult, we can do it online. With modern technology, that works just as well as meeting face-to-face.”
“No, Sekurtiti. I have to make a physical appearance for this. As the family member who gave grandpa his final notice.”
A few dozen pages of A4 printer paper were sitting on the glass table.
They were a new project idea for Toy Dream.
They concept was as follows:
The Story of the World’s Happiest Girl.
The full story will be retroactively recreated based on the many documents discovered in the Founder’s Gallery!
It was like a curse.
And if she did not break free of it, she would never escape the cage she had made for herself.
That was how it felt to her.
With her Awards gone, she would no longer vanish from ordinary people’s memories and awareness. That left her with no more excuses to continue being a shut in. In fact, if she failed to open her door now, she would end up staying in her room forever.
But.
Even so.
It was not just Tomb Priestess Sekurtiti. If Toy Dream began producing a movie, it would involve hundreds of thousands of people around the world.
Now was the time to change. No matter how much it scared her and no matter how worried she was, there would never be a better chance than this.
The white liger gently rubbed against her.
She patted the animal’s large head.
“Let’s go, liger. We can make up for the time we lost. Even if it has to be little by little.”
And.
The door clicked open.

Shiroyama Kyousuke, his sister, and Shiroyama Natsuginu. The three of them took the same route part of the way.
Toy Dream 35 was in a festive mood yet again. They had been running a “Bye Bye Summer Break” event through the day before, but it was now a

“Hello Second Term” fair. Perhaps the city could not relax without having something going on year-round.
A female Oni with long hair, two horns, and a combination of a kimono left open and a one-piece swimsuit was walking through all that.
A snake girl with the upper body of a lovely girl and the lower body of a sinister serpent was seated on a giant made from scepters and sunbathing while gathering attention in the central square.
A girl dozing off in a bizarre cradle apparently did not care which world she was in as long as she could play in her own world of dreams.
“Wow!”
His sister ran around with the contents of her backpack rattling and she reacted like they were costumed mascots.
“They’ve already ‘awakened’ the Unexplored-class? They were still stuck at the Divine-class yesterday.”
“I heard they summoned Athena and Minerva simultaneously as a test case to make sure it could handle this. Once Azalea took over, the Unexplored-class projects they had been working on in secret were released.”
Shiroyama Kyousuke had created the ignition at the core of it all, but he had needed Quad Motors’s help to act as a booster and have it spread across the world like an amoeba. He was not involved in every little project. It was similar to how those monsters had incredible influence on social media and video sites, but the giant data infrastructure was needed for that influence to spread.
Gods were no longer a rarity.
No one had to wield a Blood-Sign and rely on letters and they were not restricted to 10 minutes.
It had all begun with Azalea and Quad Motors. She had hoped to combine her company’s technology with the data in the Joruri Text she had acquired in Houbi Village, but Kyousuke brought a great change to that.
He had suggested it might no longer be necessary to create a doll as a vessel.
He had wanted to check all those documents and reconsider the overall rules of the Summoning Ceremony. And this was from the perspective of the person who had created the Colorless Little Girl from scratch and embedded her in the other world.
As a result, supernatural beings were no longer summoned into humanoid vessels. He had hoped to instead create a new technique of calling the gods of legend to a location separate from any human.
This was not the Fifth Summoning Ceremony.
He was fine with bringing an end to the age of the dinosaurs.
That was the kind of impact he wanted.
To reiterate, Azalea had planned to combine her company’s technology with the Joruri Text acquired in Houbi Village, but being able to compare those two things had meant a lot. That had helped him understand *in more*

general terms what exactly it meant to call in gods and demons from another world.
Simply put, this was a summoning method that did not use human or artificial vessels.
No, it was an awakening technique.
And what had happened as a result?
All Materials, from the Regulation, Divine, and Unexplored-classes, could freely visit this world without needing someone to support them.
Summoners were no longer needed as guides who controlled their movements.
Doctor S had created the Age of Summoning, but his son Kyousuke had wiped the slate clean with the Age of Awakening.
There was nothing left of the old age.
"…"
Shiroyama Natsuginu held her daughter's small hand and viewed it all with a somewhat sad look to her eyes.
She may have been reminded of the man who had been her husband.
The times had changed.
At the very least, it had completely left the expectations of that man who assumed the Blood-Sign system gave him everything he wanted and believed nothing more would ever be needed.
The Third and even the Fourth were a thing of the past. The miracle of 1999 was as forgotten as the beeper. It had all begun when Kyousuke assisted Azalea who had been imprisoned on Devil's Island just like him. He may have been writhing around behind those thick walls right now.
And.
"Hrahh! Good morning, Onii-chan!!"
The sound of rattling backpacks doubled.
It was a girl with her long blonde hair worn in two braids. She was still dressed in that bizarre outfit based on a school swimsuit, but when Kyousuke recalled the night before when his sister had been too excited to sleep and had him help her make sure she had everything she needed for school, he remembered that there were still pool classes in early September. Everyone in this girl's class would probably see her as just a little overeager to swim.
She was Olivia Highland, First Princess of the *Flanguild Permanently Neutral Kingdom*.
Once the Awards were removed, no one vaguely thought of them as Eastern Europe's Kingdom F anymore. Thanks to that, Queen Sinceria had apparently made a stir at an international conference as an unbelievably beautiful politician.
Meanwhile, Kyousuke's sister cautiously clung to his hip.
"Nii-sama is mine. Do not call him 'Onii-chan'."
"I can call him that if I want to. When I get back to my home kingdom, I'm enacting an Onii-chan Law to legalize polygamy and NTR."

…It sounded like he had a budding tyrant on his hands here, but what was her mother doing???
“I need to start by calming down the one who will actually listen.”
“What is it, Nii-sama?”
“Try to get along with Olivia, okay?”
“If you say so…”
Kyousuke patted his sister’s head to cool her down.
They were in different years, but they would probably be attending the same elementary school. Kyousuke could not look after them throughout the day, so he could only hope she really would get along with Olivia.
“Why does that sound so unlikely? Anyway, Olivia, I take it you really are attending school here.”
“I am. Mwa ha ha. When I get back, I can brag about how I studied abroad!!”
Kyousuke found it oddly interesting that foreigners also found the idea of studying abroad so appealing. He had always assumed the appeal was mostly fueled by the Japanese obsession with Western culture.
Meanwhile, Shiroyama Natsuginu and Sinceria were chatting a short distance away.
“Oh, does this make us friends brought together by our children?”
“I suppose it does. The people of this country of beaches and swimsuits must have a natural resistance to the sun. How can you walk around without a parasol?”
“Um, to be extremely blunt, that parasol probably does not accomplish much since the UV rays are reflected off of the ground. If you don’t at least use some UV-blocking sunscreen, you are going to have an awful time in the bath tonight.”
“Hm, do we need to determine a leader to know how to interact?”
“Oh, are you picking a fight with me? Ho ho ho. How about we compare our children’s grades next time?”
The combination of two mothers had a way of ending up with sparks flying between two smiling faces.
This was a different sort of battle.
The boys and girls could not keep up with the world where two single mothers would let their frustrations get the better of them and start fighting in the middle of the afternoon. This was too much even for Shiroyama Kyousuke.
The students’ valuable morning was frittered away on these pointless things. They were approaching the borderline of tardiness, so they could not afford to waste any more time. In fact, some other students were passing them by.
“What the hell? Those high-grade girls are scary.”
“Hayato, you’re more interested in the girls than the gods and demons? You really are a boy.”

A giant squid-like kraken crawled along the side of a skyscraper. Was that Apollo and Amaterasu flying through the sky along with the shine of the sun?
The gods did not seem to have a care in the world.
All the fighting to the death may have been the result of the human ego.
“Okay. We have to go this way!”
“See you after school.”
“Nii-sama, will you come meet me at my school then? If not, I’ll go meet you at your school!”
“That’s fine if you want. You were interested in seeing a high school, weren’t you?”
He ignored his mother’s comment of “but you wouldn’t let me visit you”.
The woman looked quite young, but she still did not understand the sensitive heart of a teenager.
After saying goodbye to his family and the royal family, he continued on to his high school.
As he followed his usual route there, he saw more summer uniforms like his own.
His classmate Rendou Akiya called out to him.
“Sup.”
“Hi.”
“The second term, huh? Give me a break. Why can’t summer vacation last forever? I feel like we’d learn a lot more about life that way.”
The giant Hræsvelgr bird seemed to cover the entire sky as it passed by overhead. Rendou held down his hair and skirt half on autopilot in response to the surprise gust of wind.
“Dammit, what is with all this lately!? Have they systemized some kind of panty shot demon!?”
“That’s apparently a test run for the upcoming autumn pollen. Once pollen season is here, they plan to manipulate the air currents to keep it out of the city center.”
“So it’s a god, then? Keep up the good work, I guess.”
While the two of them walked along, the topic of discussion was not the clash between the strongests.
They could talk about smaller things.
“By the way, I hear we’ve got a transfer student coming. A boy or a girl is fine with me as long as they’re fun.”
“Oh? You don’t limit yourself to cute girls?”
“Shiroyama-chan. There’s one problem I didn’t manage to solve over the short summer. Now is not the time to ignore it. Directly facing the path ahead is the one and only way of completing that tightrope walk!!”
“Let me tell you, this person has a lot of flaws… They’ll probably never really change, but they’re definitely too curious for their own good.”
“Wait, you know who it is, Kyousuke-kun? I seriously hope not, but it isn’t like your ex-boyfriend or something, is it!?”

Rendou Akiya apparently still had not gotten over the Rainy Girl thing. But based on what he was saying, this did not sound like a conversation Kyousuke wanted to have. He felt like casually sidestepping it all would be much easier.
Once they arrived at the school entrance, Kyousuke encountered a familiar face.
It was a woman with a long black ponytail, a tight skirt suit, and a lab coat.
“Eh? Are you the transfer student???”
“Why would I be? I am the school doctor, where you can find all your hopes and dreams. My name is Himekawa Mika. Nice to meet you.”
<Tah dah!! And here’s the real one right behind her!!>
“Whoa, this one’s way more immature!”
“Whoa, this one’s way more immature!”
Making an entrance based on an old comedy program was apparently not well received by kids these days. The normal students treated Shigara Masami like a ghost. Everyone in the world had lost their Awards, but after moving to the other world, Shigara Masami had apparently permanently become a god.
Rendou Akiya had no idea what was happening, so he tilted his head like normal.
“So what’s this? Are you twins?”
“Wait, did you put down ‘god’ as your last job on your resume?”
After leaving the two teachers(?), Kyousuke and Rendou walked to their classroom.
His friend did not forget about those two even after they were out of sight. And that was true of Kyousuke himself as well.
When they entered the classroom, Librarian-chan was glaring at him for some reason.
He assumed something Rendou Akiya had done had made her mad at him too, but the glasses girl walked over with braid swaying and whispered into his ear.
“(My sister told me to tell you ‘good job’, but what did you do over the summer? Why does my sister have to be so secretive!?)”
Come to think of it, he had not known how to explain everything to them, so he had not used Librarian or the Student Council President in the final battle even though they had talent as vessels. But where had the Rainy Girl been watching it all from?
The scary part was how plausible it seemed that she had even seen what happened in the other world.
…In a way, she was a being who had manifested herself without using the Blood-Sign system or getting Azalea’s assistance.
(So can mom do all those same things after Wisdom resurrected her from the dead? Oh, god. The world is as full of miracles and mysticism as ever, isn’t it? I just hope she doesn’t start flying through the night sky on a broom or something.)

Morning homeroom began before long.
The information from Rendou Akiya proved accurate. Their homeroom teacher announced the transfer student before making the normal announcements.
They heard a footstep out in the hall.
It was not a loud thing, but that one sound grabbed everyone’s attention.
“It is a pleasure to meet all of you.”
Silver twintails swayed.
She looked a little uncomfortable since the school uniform could not be made all in white, but she still stood behind the teacher’s desk with a smile on her face.
“My name is Mary Ann Shiroyama. I hope we can all get along.”

Facts

- Updating system…
- The system will automatically reboot once the update is complete. Please wait.

Ending X-02: The Age of Awakening Has Arrived

“I thought the world was supposed to become a happy place.”
“That depends on your definition of happy.”
(Ending X-02 Open 09/02 00:02)
The Age of Awakening Has Arrived

Summoner was no longer a viable profession.
Midnight had passed and it was now September 2.
The middle-aged man named Leonardo Pounds placed his hands on his hips and breathed an exasperated sigh.
“Times sure can change, huh, Kevin?”
A single large space with no walls or partitions was brightly illuminated by the many halogen lights hanging from the ceiling framework, so it may have been reminiscent off a school gym.
But this was no gym.
This was one of the warehouses in the coastal harbor district of Toy Dream 35.
“The Summoning Ceremony is a thing of the past. From the age of summoning to awakening. Ha ha ha. I get it! With everyone’s Awards taken, we’ve all gotta start back at the beginning! But no matter the age, there will always be a place for religions and mythology. And that gives me room to work my magic. Our great sex cult adventures have only just begun!!”
The way he put it could not have been worse, but that view did not just come from an overestimation of himself. No matter how silly it was, the most basic desires could be a frightening thing when they were used to bind people together and, when enough people gathered together, they would begin to forget their original purpose for gathering and feel weirdly drawn to each other. Just like with scams, the trick was to isolate the marks, keep them from thinking through their decisions, and drag them up onto the ridiculous theatre stage.
Leonardo was a charismatic guy. He was decently confident in his ability to command the scene. So if it would allow him to display his talents there, making a scene at this late night party was fine with him.

A woman with a pure white habit covering her from head to toe walked through that same warehouse.
She was The Saint.
She was like his polar opposite when it came to worshipping the Queen.
Except…
“Heh heh heh. She does not deserve to be called Queen. She abandoned us. Without even asking first. Oh, I was such a fool. I spent so much time and effort worshipping her, but no matter how much faith and belief you have, it’s all over in the blink of an eye once she abandons you. I need to grow stronger all on my own.”
(Hmm. She looks kinda disoriented and is muttering some scary stuff, but maybe I should look for a chance to sleep with her. YOLO, right!? I have no idea how she escaped that tropical island, but doing a runaway prisoner sounds weirdly hot!! Looks like she’s got some psychological scars, but that means this is my chance. Mwa ha ha, I can help comfort her all night long!!)
There was a reason they were gathered in this warehouse in the middle of the night.
They had needed a large space, but they now also needed walls and a roof to hide them.
Their Awards had been taken.
They were no longer bound by the three major powers, but they also had to worry about a lot more eyes than they used to: police, security guards, ombudsmen, tabloid cameramen, etc.
“So how far along are the containers?”
“The next one is the last one. Once we open it and fill in the eastern corner, the barrier will be complete.”
A huge shape sat in the center.
That silhouette could not be made by human hands and did not look naturally occurring either.
“Detta, huh? You gotta love those prominent curves. And a young woman who knows how to operate machinery like that gets a lot of points from me!! Whew, I’m a little afraid what’s gonna happen to me tonight. I might just dry up into a mummy! Kevin, bring me some maca and caffeine! A whole bunch of it!!”
Those who could not fit in would never fit in.
In the end, that was the truth of the matter.
And people were not made to simply obey. For better or for worse.
“By the way, I would like to point out one thing.”
“What is it, Hot Body #1?”
“Should we really have left that Biondetta on her own like that?”
“Not to worry! Detta can wait until I’m ready for her! Oh, but if she can’t wait and starts ‘operating her machinery’ on her own, I’m not about to complain!”
“What if I told you the GPS tracker I hid in her clothing is showing her in an unusual location???”

Just then, bright searchlights lit up the warehouse from seemingly every angle.

In the same coastal harbor district of Toy Dream 35, two sets of racing footsteps and tense breathing could be heard among the warehouses so late at night.
“Pant, pant!”
“R-Renge. Um, uh!?”
The bright white and red made it impossible to hide in the dark night. Those shrine maiden outfits belonged to Meinokawa Renge and her twin sister Higan.
A different pair jumped over the twin shrine maidens’ heads as they moved along the top of the containers stacked up like small mountains.
“We were supposed to have them surrounded, so what idiot got lazy and left an opening!? They’re lucky the great Claude here can pick up the slack.”
“Probably that Max Layard and Ellie Slide. They might have learned to derive pleasure from losing at this point. Aren’t you glad they gave you an excuse to show off?”
“3A? Detta is in there as part of the sting operation and we are talking about a wannabe sex cult. If we don’t do something, this is going to take a rather X-rated turn!!”
“That seems to delight you a little too much, so here is a suggestion: why not wait a bit before rescuing her? I feel like that waitress demon could stand to suffer a little.”
The Blood-Sign Summoning Ceremony was no more, their Awards were gone, and the major powers of Government, Illegal, and Freedom no longer existed. An age of chaos had arrived. Various forces were at work in the open and in secret and countless groups were continually joining together and breaking apart.
Whoever took control of that chaos would be the winner of the next age. Would it be a vast empire ruling over several continents, would it be an educational organization full of all sorts of knowledge, would it be a global religion, or would it be a multinational corporation? No one knew.
The blonde-haired, blue-eyed shrine maiden named Higan spoke up with tears in her eyes.
“I thought the world was supposed to become a happy place with the Blood-Signs gone and – eek – the threat of the White Queen gone.”
“That depends on your definition of happy. If you want to create your own empire, this chaos will look like the opportunity you need to reach happiness!”
Black-haired Renge responded while pulling out a device that looked like a stun baton with a small umbrella at the top. It was a directional anti-electronics bazooka that sent powerful EM waves out in a single direction to destroy any security cameras, IR sensors, or other electronics within 20

meters. They needed this now that their Awards were gone and they had to worry about the police and security, but then Renge came to a stop.
The security cameras had already been destroyed.
“Someone’s there!?”
She sensed a presence.
And they clearly had no intention of hiding any longer.
First, some trained dobermans were released and then a few figures leaned out from the tall stacks of containers so they could target the twin sisters.
Renge pulled a paper charm from her pocket and held it between her index and middle finger.
It was a Storm charm.
She only had to move her hands in a set pattern and mutter an incantation under her breath.
“I lift a request to Susanoo, god of wind and violence who wanders this world. Please lend a portion of your power to your powerless worshiper!!”
That was all it took for a raging tornado to take her side.
In this case, targeting the obvious dogs or snipers would have been a mistake. First, she used the wind to blow away all trace of their scent to eliminate the risk of the dogs tracking them and then she had it knock over the stacks of containers to drop the elevated assassins into the abyss.
With a dull thudding, something rolled over to Higan’s feet.
It was one of the snipers’ weapons.
The short sword painted yellow was likely a Symbolic Weapon from the West.
“The gods exist,” said Shrine Maiden Renge while carefully walking through the labyrinthine harbor block while the containers collapsed all around her.
“And they can exist just fine in this world ruled by Newtonian physics. So there’s no need to go through the process of summoning them from the other world. If you directly appeal to the gods and draw out a portion of their power, humans can use miracles. You can use the cardinal directions, the traditional elements, and other symbols to incorporate the gods into your own spells.”
“From summoning to awakening…”
“*The age of magic* has arrived.”
No longer were the gods summoned into the fragile and restrictive bodies of vessels. In the Age of Awakening, the gods were brought to this world as gods, so the previous rules no longer applied.
“Hurry up and finish this, will you?”
The voice in their earpieces was as condescending and unconcerned as ever.
Maria Heartocean.
It was pretty clear that woman was not going to run to their aid if they asked for help.
“I know everyone is vying for superiority right now, but I will cut ties with any organization that would not benefit me if it rises to the top. That is why

I developed those charms to match your character and lent them to you. And I'm giving you a special exemption on payment for the time being, but if you fail to accomplish anything here, you will have to pay for it all yourself."
"I'm hungry, Renge!!"
"Dammit. Does the Meinokawa Shrine have to be poor no matter what happens in the world!?"
That was when a tremor shook the earth.
This further moved the collapsing piles of containers, so they had to make sure they were not crushed.
But blonde Higan was focused on something more distant than that immediate threat.
"L-look, Renge, look!"
"…"
A shape rose up even higher than the giant gantry crane used to transfer cargo to and from ships.
It was a mountainous serpent with not just eight heads, but more heads than one wished to count. That venomous lake-dwelling serpent was from Greek mythology.
"The Hydra. They really are *poachers*!"
The gods and demons were wandering reality with physical bodies. And people could borrow their power using wands and charms. …So it was not surprising that some people would want to capture them and surround them with a barrier so they could keep that power to themselves. After all, the gods had no civil rights.
Now, could Susanoo's storm alone contain this?
Miracles were widely accessible now, but you would still have an advantage if you directly controlled the gods or demons they originated from. It was like Renge and Higan were walking around with normal computers and phones while this group had a supercomputer larger than a school building.
"Higan, use your charm too. You still have Sun, right?"
"Ehh!? I-I'm too scared to borrow Amaterasu-sama's power."
"I'll help you out with my Susanoo. The Hydra can regenerate its heads and two will replace every one that is removed, but the wounds are weak to fire. The air blades from my Storm isn't enough, so you need to burn the wounds afterwards!"
Another tremor ran through the ground.
Their logic may have been sound, but your instincts would try to stop you from challenging a monster taller than you. And this Hydra was larger than a gantry crane.
"R-Renge."
"Wait, Higan. I know you're scared, but stay quiet. We can't screw up our positioning here."
"No, not that. Um! There's someone behind that container. A girl!!"

If it was simply an enemy, they could have ended it by silencing her with the power of their charms.
But in a way, this was much more troublesome.
“ng – uu?”
It was hesitant, but they heard a girl’s voice suing a certain system that sounded almost nostalgic in this age.
But they understood.
That nearly-nude girl was holding herself in her arms and looking toward the distant Hydra in fear.
“uu – kq, wz – iu – ou – hi – lm – ou – weq – ei – yh – ml!”
That settled it.
Meinokawa Renge shouted without thinking.
“Are you kidding!? She’s not a part of all this!?”
“This way, um, hurry! The containers are collapsing!!”
The giant Hydra gave a roar.
That was enough to bind people’s hearts and make them tremble.
However.
With a tremendous explosion, the Hydra’s giant body was blown to smithereens in a single attack.

Something could be heard swishing through the air.
It came from the lighthouse at the end of the harbor.
And the person overlooking everything by sitting dangerously up on the viewing platform railing there was the Rainy Girl, Umie Shouko. She was facing outwards and kicking the slender legs extending from her skirt.
“You sure are overprotective.”
“Not really,” replied another voice.
The viewing platform surrounded the top of the lighthouse and included the equipment for the giant light source, but another figure stood on the actual roof located even higher than that. Her back was leaning against the lightning rod in the center.
Shiroyama Natsuginu.
Just like the Rainy Girl, that woman’s life had been saved in a way that separated her from the main line of history.
She spoke with the confidence of an adult.
“That was not me.”
“…”
“You also only intended to observe without actually helping, right? Unlike them, our power is not bound by the rules of letters or charms. A single fingertip can produce abnormal results, but we cannot predict what kind of side effects that will have. I am figuring out the rules bit by bit by leaping, using clairvoyance, and playing something like a mine-searching minigame, but in the worst case, a single coin toss could destroy the world.”
“Why are you here?”

“The Saint’s presence scared me a little. I was curious what had happened to *that man* since he was imprisoned on the same island, but it looks like there was nothing to worry about. …It would seem none of his fellow prisoners bothered to help him when they broke out. Losing your popularity is a tragic thing.”
She had done plenty of awful things to Kyousuke and his sister.
She had simply watched when she should have intervened and saved her children and then she criticized him like she had done nothing wrong herself. Even if Wisdom had set it up that way, she had said some terrible things to her child in the foolish hope of regaining everything she had lost.
There may have been no place for her in this age of victors.
But that brother and sister had accepted their pathetic mother.
So she had decided on an absolute rule for herself.
She would atone for everything by actually protecting that happy family this time.
But the Rainy Girl did not take such a dry view of things. If this organization escaped and the risk of them reaching her sister grew past a certain threshold, she would intervene and mercilessly crush them. No matter what kind of distortion that brought to the world.
But Shiroyama Natsuginu, that mother in an apron, smiled thinly.
“Don’t worry,” she said. “I can tell at a glance. This new age belongs to them.”

A long skinny object spun in the boy’s hand.
It was a magic wand only a certain boy could use. It looked a lot like a Blood-Sign, but instead of being a device to summon power, it was a Symbolic Weapon that placed certain elemental colors in his hand to strengthen his internal image. Both ends of the long, skinny wand glowed with a different color and the light trailed after it to draw dual circles in the empty air.
That weapon was named Magick.
His Awards had been taken, so he could not position himself anywhere that would be spotted by security personnel or cameras.
“First I create it and now I destroy it. I need to apologize to Quad Motors after this is over. The Hydra can no longer support its presence here, so it has returned to the other world. It was meant to purify the seawater, so I’ll have to do a largescale public infrastructure Awakening to make up for this.”
Three people stood in the moonlight atop the roof of one of the many large warehouses.
One was a boy in a hoodie and comfortable pants.
And two lovely girls stood on either side of him.
“Honestly, you humans never do change. Is your species unable to live without these selfish desires?”

“Nh, the sea breeze is sticky. I want to get this over with and take a bath with you, Nii-sama. He’s really good at washing hair. I get so sleepy in the bath when he does it.”
“…What?”
“It’s too soon for you, new girlfriend. That’s a special privilege for only me and mother.”
Since the gods and demons of legend existed in the real world with physical bodies, whoever controlled them became the victors of this new age.
So what did that make this boy for having the two strongest and most irregular Unexplored-classes by his side?
He could move between worlds and in some cases even choose to save the dead.
He *managed the gates of the underworld* and could communicate with gods like Odin, Enma, Hades, and Osiris.
(Well, my life will only last 100 years and I doubt I can overturn even my own death.)
“Iai, any readings?”
“Yes, Nii-sama. Three primary ones. Othinus and the Aoandon from the Divine-class and the Lady of Purple Lightning from the Unexplored-class. And one unidentified one.”
The small girl’s body became translucent at times like this.
Her soul had been resurrected as a human, which had removed the sister’s soul from the Colorless Little Girl, but the empty shell that had left behind had been preserved. So by transferring her soul in a process similar to astral projection, she could swap from being a human to being the Queen killer at any time.
They had reconciled with the twintailed girl dressed in a white battle costume, but her power remained.
The Colorless Little Girl had to periodically release her power or else her mere presence would distort everyone around her.
“Mary, I want to know about the humans too.”
“There are far too many to count. It seems like a decently sized group. Let’s decide what roles to play. I will provide the attack power, so that little thing can lock onto the individual humans and give them barriers so no one dies. Give them each their individual rooms like a honeycomb.”
“Boo, why does the old twintail lady always get to do the fun part?”
“Silence, twerp. You are the Queen killer, remember? Reverse the roles and you would break through my barrier and what good would that be?”
They had a plan.
Once they took action, the entire largescale battle would be over after a count of three, like some kind of magic trick.
The beings designated as Regulation, Divine, or Unexplored-class could now freely move between worlds without a Blood-Sign spelling out their names. That meant someone who could not be summoned with the Blood-Sign system would be here as well.

“Wisdom must be out there somewhere.”
“And maybe a lot closer than we thought.”
Kyousuke looked down into the harbor district to see two familiar faces: Meinokawa Renge and her twin sister Higan.
And.
There was a third girl nervously running through the dark harbor while they tugged on her slender hand.
He had made the world like this to keep his promise.
“*Kyousuke,* do you still need to hear the words ‘help me’?”
Mary Ann placed a hand on his shoulder and whispered that question in his ear.
Shiroyama Kyousuke responded with a shake of his head.
And he gave a short reply.
“Not in this new age, no.”
The age of summoners had ended.
He had shaken off all his defeat and guilt.
He was bound by no one now.
So Magician Shiroyama Kyousuke gathered the power of two Unexplored-classes in his wand and ran toward the late-night battlefield.

Facts

- Reboot complete.
- Welcome to the Age of Awakening, Administrator.

Afterword

“……”
“……”
(Postscript Open ??/?? ??:??)
Afterword

And with that, we have a nice even 10 volumes.
This is Kamachi Kazuma.
What is the best resolution and how best to pull it off? I have been asking that question this whole time. …To be honest, the White Queen went on such a rampage in this series, that I ended up heading in a different direction than I initially planned. I’ve written a lot of different things, but this may have been the first time the story changed so much based on the pull of a single character.
In this volume alone, Kyousuke was moping all on his own at the start, but with each Stage, he continued to get help from the others around him and he relied on them more and more. Kyousuke was oppressed in that small house with no one he could ask for help, but I remember it feeling like he had saved himself when he seemed to emerge from his hard chrysalis and spread his wings as he grew up.
The biggest change from my plans can be seen in the fact that Meinokawa Higan was actually supposed to be the main heroine (throughout the series).
Volume 1’s final Facts section says “the battle between those two strongest individuals will continue until one side falls or until one side is saved” and my initial plan was for Kyousuke and Higan to go and beat the Queen as the final boss no matter what hardships he went through before reaching that point. …By the way, the “eternal game of tag” where Kyousuke would turn his experiences into a religious text, spread it throughout the world, be resurrected millennia later as a Divine-class, and take revenge on the Queen was some insurance I had ready in case the series got canceled.
But once I actually wrote the series, it ended up like you saw here. Shiroyama Kyousuke and the White Queen dealt with their issues, saved each other, and saved even his dead sister and mother. …But I feel like that kind of spirit is what you should expect from Shiroyama Kyousuke who said “this has to be what everyone really wanted to do” in front of the Rainy Girl

in Volume 2. Having Renge and Higan always witness the most important thing in a volume was a remnant of my initial plans.

It isn't possible.
It simply can't be done.

This protagonist was constantly fighting against those negative views. So once he truly broke free of those bonds, what choice would he make? Kyousuke managed to even break free of the author's intentions to snag the perfect happy ending, so I think he has more "life" to him than any of the other protagonists I've written.

This volume also had him visit some previously unseen locations like the 12 zodiacs and the other world where the Unexplored-classes live. That might seem impossible, but with everything built up in the previous volumes, he pulled it off. Even I was surprised at the level of freedom he had achieved while I was writing it.
There have been a few different date scenes with the White Queen in the previous volumes, but this one should have left a different impression. If they do not try to fight, there is no conflict. I think you should have seen a change to the world as seen through Kyousuke's eyes.
And at the same time, I thought it was useful to include some foreshadowing for the later battle in the ridiculous "Spot the Difference" scene with the two White Queens. It always makes me happy to give some actual meaning to those scenes. I think of it like the difference between some untouched ore and a beautifully cut gem.
The Third Summoning Ceremony was created by Doctor S and eventually left his control, but the Fourth Summoning Ceremony was built up by Kyousuke. Then what about the Age of Awakening he built up with help from Azalea, Aoi, and the others? I thought if I made it more than just what was most convenient for him, it would leave room for an expanding world of hopes and possibilities, but what did you think?

I give my thanks to my illustrator Ikawa Waki-san and my editors Miki-san, Anan-san, Nakajima-san, Miyazaki-san, Mitera-san, and Yamamoto-san. Blood-Sign was exposition-heavy and fairly inaccessible, so I am very thankful you supported it with such cool and cute illustrations. I hope we can work together again someday.
And I give my thanks to the readers. From the age of summoning to awakening. How did you like this story of a boy who makes the impossible possible? He could be awkward and selfish, but he still managed to shake free of my plans for him and achieve a happy ending. I think he managed that because all of you were hoping for their smiles. Thank you very, very much for leading me to this conclusion.

And now I announce the end of one story while hoping their happy days will continue forever in all of your hearts.

Oh, no. The mom is even crazier than the sister.
-Kamachi Kazuma

Summoner Name List

(While I am at it, I decided to list up all the summoner names given in the series. I generally thought of them as something like online screennames, but I also made them a second name given by the people around the summoner instead of by the summoner themselves.
…So the lesser-known summoners will not have one. That might be because they are lacking in skill like Renge and Higan or because they were too isolated from the rest of the summoners like the members of the Queen's Miniature Garden. Also, these are based on people's observations, so keep in mind that they do *not* always pinpoint the person's true nature.)

Perfect Dragon (Slender Body, Hidden Weapons)[1]
This is the name for Lu Niang Lan who is a regular character yet does not use the Summoning Ceremony. I really wanted the word "dragon" in there somewhere! And I love how she seems to be showing off all her bodylines yet is actually hiding weapons everywhere. If I hadn't gone with the modified China dress, I might have made her a kunoichi.

Uniquely Selfless
Just one character away from the kanji phrase for "truly unique". I like how changing just that one character completely changes the meaning. This is the name used by every member of Guard of Honor, the Queen-worshipping group. If you look at Azalea in Volume 1 Stage 02, you can probably see what the Truly Unique and Uniquely Selfless lifestyles are like.

Alice (with) Rabbit (Non-Killing King)
As referenced in the main text, this name was based off of the guide rabbit in Alice in Wonderland. A name full of memories and the starting point for it all. He ended up becoming a character that finds the girls who ended up in the world of Summoning Ceremony after falling down the rabbit hole and returns them to where they came from.

Golden Luxury (Elegant Demon Lord)
Blonde Azalea's name in Government. She too was Uniquely Selfless while with Guard of Honor, but I think I gave her a gorgeous name for her work as a *decoy* within Government. As a side note, am I the only one who thinks

“luxury” sounds sexier than “celebrity”? …Maybe I’m just confusing it with “lingerie”.

Perfect Game (Perfect Victory)
With so many names, I thought it would be fun to include some that did not at all match the person they belonged to and Max’s lifestyle grew from there. He is a summoner who crawls through the mud to protect people’s smiles in a different way from Kyousuke.

Tricky AAA
To be honest, this was is the top candidate for a name I chose with no thought whatsoever. I even used AAA later on with 3A. I decide to make them someone who is really skilled as an individual but has trouble with teamwork, but I kind of feel like that describes almost every Blood-Sign summoner…

Diabolos (Loving Demon)
Just like with the kanji for Azalea’s Golden Luxury, I did not hesitate to include demonic motifs in the names of the summoners of righteous Government. I think that solidified their image as an organization with a mixture of the bitter and the sweet.
I made Government the kind of righteousness that includes the filthy circumstances of the adults and I had the Queen worshipers be the unnaturally pure-looking organizations.

Bloodbath Rhapsody
I pictured them as a cheerful summoner that enjoys combat like an event or a party. When on the side of powerful righteousness, winning is expected, so I figured people would either grow sick of battle or learn to enjoy it. Someone who starts earning points base on their own invented rules would definitely be the latter.

L.D. 250
I based them on the concept of LD50 used to measure the lethal dose of a toxin. They apparently inject the toxin into 100 rats and see how much is needed until 50 of them are dead. I changed that to 250 to say this summoner takes things way too far and makes absolutely sure their opponent is dead. They’re a side character, but at Freedom Award 954, they have actually earned more Awards than Kyousuke or Biondetta.

Telomere’s End
The name for Hayato’s father. Benikomichi Fuuki gave it to him. Telomere is a genetic term referring to a repeating sequence thought to be related to aging and lifespan. The “end” refers to the fact that he was an assassin who supplied an inescapable fate. Since Benikomichi Fuuki’s affection was for

Hayato’s father and not Hayato himself, Telomere’s End could be seen as an ironic name referring to that which cuts off life and genetic inheritance.

Academia (No Battles, Total Victory)
The kanji is a modification of a few common kanji phrases. This name belongs to Maria who specializes in research instead of combat. In the Blood-Sign world, she is a truly clever kind of winner. Instead of being the strongest in battle, she talks things out to prevent the need for fighting to develop in the first place. The value in that can be seen in Kyousuke who has always longed for an ordinary family. Mothers and fathers who fight against society to protect their families are a wonderful thing.

Sky Brain
Since they were an enemy that specializes in aerial combat, I combined two relatively simple words. To be honest, sky and brain are fantastic words that sound fairly meaningful no matter what you combine them with. I wonder if you could give a character a strange sort of presence by combining them with words that normally wouldn’t match, like Pretty Brain or Sky Pink?

Liar Cat (Vengeance Dyer)
Like normal vengeance except she dyes her vessel partner in its colors without them noticing. I actually gave Biondetta a different name to start with, but when I realized what she was doing instead of simply losing herself in the joy of revenge herself, I went ahead and changed it. Yes, sir or ma’am. But how you use it is up to you. I think I made her feel like a sleazy loan shark who spots someone struggling after being abandoned and approaches them with a smile.
If this had been a story about revenge instead of salvation, I would definitely have made her the protagonist. She is a bad person who takes revenge too far, but she is also someone who turns herself into a bad person, gives her client the position of another victim instead of a criminal, and carries their sins for them.

Scorpion 11
A summoner based on the Scorpio constellation. They are persistent, but if their enemy loses focus for even a moment, they will strike at a weak point and turn everything around. While expanding on that, I realized I had created a very idiosyncratic character who constantly takes on challenges they should not be able to win yet somehow survives to the end.

Hikikomori (Non-Aggressive Defense)
A very straightforward name for the shut-in girl Aika. Lu Niang Lan is a super offense-focused vessel who breaks into the enemy formation and kills them with precision attacks, so I thought of Aika as the opposite: a summoner who specializes in defense by retreating, withdrawing, and

holing up within her own formation. Nevertheless, she was being attacked an awful lot in Volume 3, but while her defense might seem limited to her top-floor living space, you should realize otherwise once the Founder's Gallery is revealed in Volume 6. …And what if Biondetta's group had happened to enter that gallery in Volume 3?

Madam Professor
Shigara Masami's better-known name. Since these names are given by the people around the summoner, I thought it would make sense for some people to have more than one. The Awards are not separated out. In a case like this, the hidden identity can seem like the true one, but with Shigara Masami, I think she was more comfortable and could open up more in environments where she was known as Madam Professor.

Love and Hate Aggressor
I thought of her like a strict instructor or a teacher with a scary look in her eyes. Looks scary but always repays someone who saves one of her students. Normally doesn't fight, but will pursue the summoner who killed one of her students to the ends of the earth. I like how those few facts are enough to glimpse a multifaceted "dere".

Cursed Doll
Just looking at the name, it sounds like an extremely standard occult name. A vessel who nevertheless wields a Blood-Sign. The Blood-Sign system has the summoner manage the Material, but this was one test case in opening a hole in those rules.

Gozaru Summoner
A costumed summoner made by expanding on the Gozaru Samurai mascot seen in the series. They might seem weird, but in a world flooded with Toy Dream cities and products, this might be the ultimate camouflage to visit any country or region with your face hidden.

Lionheart
They might live up to their name even less than Max with Perfect Game. Dragons and dogs are fairly common, but I feel like tiger and lion motifs aren't as commonly used. Aika's white liger would fall under that category too.

Harem Collector 98
There are a few people in the Blood-Sign world (such as Kyousuke) whose skill and charisma have unintentionally led them to create something of a harem, but I thought it would be neat to have a character who became a summoner for the sole purpose of intentionally creating one. The 98 is not how many people they have won over but a symbol of their failure in letting

2 out of 100 people get away. …The emphasis on that failure is a sign of jealousy in the people who gave them the name.

Amplifier 500
A simple combination of an amp and 500. This is the personal name for Incense Expert Ellie Slide who works with Max. She was actually killed, stuffed in a metal drum, and covered with asphalt in Volume 2, but since she was not the direct target of salvation like the Rainy Girl or Kyousuke's mother, she does not get any special powers. Similar to Lu Niang Lan, she is a rare example of someone having value as a vessel alone. Her overpowered technological skill is on par with Azalea. …Maybe this is a world where young girls are the most powerful.

Humanism
The official ruler of old Government. A strongest character who directly faces the Materials through her belief in human strength. She would never abandon her hope and possibilities as a human, so she was not corrupted by the White Queen. In that sense, she is a bigger person than Elvast who "only" reached Award 1000. Although perhaps she was too strong and that is why she misjudged when to withdraw from the Secret War and lost her life.

Open Bluff (King of Harm)
All harm and no benefit. Keeps bluffing even with his cards visible. With Government's Humanism the way she was, I created him as the opposite. This king of underground society has no skill yet stands at the top of Illegal and cheats his way toward breaking down the world around him. But because he knows his power is an illusion, he also seeks real power more than anyone else. Whatever he might have said, he was a real summoner who took up a Blood-Sign to protect the world and lost his life after fighting to the bitter end.

Perfect Equilibrium
And here we have the scum who ran away because it was too much of a pain to mess with. She is the official leader of old Freedom, but she is also irresponsible enough to not support any group because she prioritizes her own freedom. Hence "equilibrium". Her true identity is the Yellow Gills of the Three who is only interested in her own sleep. She is the stereotypical sealed monster who will devour any who disturb her slumber. She is not good or evil and in fact has no interest in the real world at all, but if a human defeated her with only "their own power", she might fall for them and actually face reality. Wouldn't it be super cute if she normally refuses to wake up and clings to the covers, but will rub her eyes and reluctantly wake up if the one person she deems worthy softy calls out to her?

Blasphemous Inspiration
Akura's name as a researcher, similar to Maria. He is a mad scientist, but you need roles like that when writing a story. Instead of a scientist who builds up his research results as he goes, he is the inventor type who has sudden flashes of insight. His eccentricities left his relationships and social skills in shambles, so he is fully reliant on his intelligence.

World Complete (End of the World)
Shigara Masami's name as a legendary summoner and the leader of the three old powers. It comes from how she traversed all three major powers and earned all of the Awards. She appeared in this volume as a god who could create a deathless world, but the term "end of the world" also appeared in Volume 2 as the theory on which Hayato and Benikomichi's attempted deathless world was based. She is another summoner like the Yellow Gills who abandoned the fight during the Secret War, but her decision was based on the idea that she could leave behind a chance for the surviving children (including the White Queen) even if she lost the war. Unlike Humanism who went out in a blaze of glory, she could not force her strength on those around her even if it meant everyone called her a coward.

Colorful Museum
From their twisted hobby of collecting things including humans. I thought of them as ending up with a mansion of junk because they lose interest in their collection but cannot bring themselves to throw anything out. Not every nonviolent person is a pacifist.

Delivery Heaven 2 Hell
A courier summoner who calmly completes their job despite knowing their deliveries will bring misfortune either to the recipient or the delivery itself. This might be another form of the precision-guided missile Kyousuke was when he was younger.

The Saint
I gave her a pure-sounding name so you would suspect there had to be an ulterior motive. And she turns out to have a saint side and a witch side while the leader of the summoner-vessel pair switches depending on the flip of a coin. And keep in mind there is no "correct answer" like that the witch is her true form or she is actually an M. Since she has great skill but no fixed personal identity, she is like taking Azalea from Volume 1 in a different direction.

All Around Armament
The decision to abbreviate it as 3A was of course partially for the bust size joke. Similar to the modified China dress person, she looks thinly dressed

yet her clothing is packed full of hidden weapons. She is an assassin, but I thought of her as a Trojan horse who could do more damage by using her lovely appearance to sneak her armory into the enemy formation.

Thousand Eater (One who Has Exceeded 1000)
This title technically refers to anyone who has achieved Award 1000 and not Elvast in particular. But in the current timeline, he is the only one who could do it, so it automatically became his name. He is the rusty king who has grown tired of fighting because he developed the surefire method of summoning the White Queen with the first shot. He wanted to remain human, so the approach to Award 1000 was like a countdown to doom for him. Being such a selfish leader of Government was his way of reminding himself that he was a human first and foremost. If he had been a little stronger, he could have been a match for Humanism who had conquered that fear.

Doctor S
Since he is Kyousuke's father, the S was an absolute necessity. As a researcher, he is more like Volume 5's Akura, but he can hide his greed, he can fight on his own, and he can get along in the world, so he is much harder to deal with. If you think of Akura as the random attacker type who was at the mercy of his own ideas (or delusions), then Doctor S is the serial killer type who preserves a perfect presence in society while calmly fulfilling his desires in secret. As someone who would do anything for his research, he is the polar opposite of Shigara Masami or Humanism who pursued human strength. He is a hopelessly bad person, but without someone like him, the door to the Blood-Sign system would never have been opened.

Noble Bride (Bride of the State)
The name of Sinceria, the impressive mama character who perfectly maintained the three identities of a queen, a mother, and a woman. Being a mother generally requires a husband, but I added the "of the state" to brush aside that image as much as possible. "Divorced" is a taboo word. …At first glance, she looks like a caring mother focused on her family, but if you dig into her conversations with Rachel, you can catch some glimpses of some more worrying things.

Queen Executioner
A second name given to Kyousuke in Volume 7 after he used the Colorless Little Girl to kill the White Queen. Generally used by his enemies. I thought a lot about it, but since he had killed the Queen and spread the word of her death, I decided to base it on the idea of the public execution of a powerful figure. Back when Kyousuke was still bound by her, the White Queen would probably have enjoyed being put in some scraps of cloth, shackled, and

dragged out into the public square as a part of flirting with him. She wants to be the kind of self-absorbed couple who shows off their relationship instead of keeping it hidden, so she was probably wiggling in excitement when she heard he was given a name with “Queen” in it.

War Criminal (War Slaughterer)
A different sort of ruler of the underground society than Open Bluff, the old king of Illegal. Boy A, aka Irigaru Tarou, was made to be as nondescript as possible. He is the ultimate criminal who embodies the nightmarish idea that the most frightening things are found in your closest neighbors. He knows what he does is wrong but still does not hesitate, so he is even more hopeless than Elvast who secretly agonized over it all. He was taken out of the fight by Kyousuke, but that means he was such a villain that not even Kyousuke could think up another way to stop him.

Eisen Rosen (Barbed Wire)
I used a rose and flower petal motif for the Summoning Ceremony itself, but I took that a step further and used a metal flower image for her. She is an outlaw but also the class rep type who makes sure everyone follows the rules. However, she is interested in the rules of the criminal organizations, not the laws of the nations.

Railroad Executioner
A railroad-obsessed summoner. And one who is interested in the people killed when hit by trains, so he is a horribly insensitive criminal. I started with wanting a brutal character who would calmly execute people according to a schedule and I expanded that based on the idea of a timetable. He might use rhythmic shaking or the high-voltage power poles to enter a trance.

Monster Freak
A summoner who uses Materials as beasts instead of gods. His clothing and Blood-Sign are both made of animal materials, but that is related to his complex related to the weakness of his own human body. He reassures himself by showing himself he can control the animals with the power of civilization. But he does not hate animals and will take good care of them as long as he has made his dominance clear.

Creation Dead
A combination of opposite words. A nonproductive summoner who creates death. I could have really increased the characters destructive power by making them a little girl wearing nothing but a cape, but she never had a chance to appear.

Killer Acrobat

Another combination of opposites. Acrobatics are generally meant to just barely keep you alive, but this summoner uses those techniques to kill. Instead of fighting on the flat ground, they constantly move around to fight in the air instead. Most of their effectiveness is determined by whether or not they can throw the Incense Grenade and gain control of the Artificial Sacred Ground. Since they jump around a lot, going with a cheerleader or gymnastics theme might have been better than a circus one.

Sinful Monk
Simple and straightforward. The fact that a summoner with this name reached the 900s in Illegal tells you all you need to know about the path they have taken, don't you think? In a way, they have stayed true to themselves to the end. Yes, this was a summoner who could remain mistaken because they were powerful enough to defeat anyone who protested.

Puppet✝Theatre✝Crime✝Device
I finally used a symbol in their name and don't ask me how you're supposed to pronounce it, but since these names are based on screennames, I went for it anyway. I started with Theatre Crime for the motif and added the other words to the front and back as extra flavoring.

(*The following are not names given to characters, but these are some things that had a large influence on the setting but never got much of an explanation because the story did not demand it.)

Quad Motors
The quad part comes from the ridiculous idea that they monopolize the weapon supply for all four branches of the US military. Repliglass, one of the major twists of this setting, is either supplied by this company or by rival companies from other countries.
But they are actually European instead of American because the Magentarain family has been watching what America does from within and sometimes intervening ever since the country achieved independence from England. The Magentarain family is also a member of the Round Table, a group of old European bloodlines. (Since that is a collection of *nobles*, a *royal* like Sinceria is not a part of the group. A queen can construct a community with herself at the top, so she would feel no need to join a group of equal members.)
…In Index, the European powers of England, Rome, and Russia control the magical side of things while America lags behind due to an insufficient occult foundation, but in Blood-Sign, America has used their money and technology to increase their presence while shoving Europe aside. Quad Motors has some level of indirect control on military matters, but that is far

from perfect and there is room for interference from Toy Dream who have global influence through their media and cities.

Toy Dream

A multinational entertainment company that wishes to fill the world with toys and give people dreams. They do not know much about the occult, but their fairy tales and movies have all been massive hits because they draw inspiration from the true occult books and antiques gathered using all their money.

They are a giant organization that represents the world, but they actually knew nothing about the secrets of the world. That was one of the major twists in the Blood-Sign setting. The Round Table never intervened because despite all the money they spent, they never showed signs of unusual desires, but the founder self-destructed through Volume 8's Blue Film.

Meinokawa Shrine

Meinokawa refers to the Sanzu River and the names Higan and Renge are based on the image of flowers blossoming on its bank. Because they are the ones who manage who comes and goes between the two worlds. …But even with the syncretism of Shinto and Buddhism, doesn't this seem more of a Buddhist temple thing than a Shinto shrine thing? The Joruri Method's name came from the Ningyou Joruri. That is a collection of many different techniques – woodworking, clothing, anatomy, joints, dollmaking, music, etc. – so I had the evolution (or the gathering?) of the Queen's images come from that line of creating tools for something like a theatrical ceremony.

The Meinokawa Shrine has very little influence on the Summoning Ceremony industry given their level of technology, but that is because they were satisfied after completing Aoi as the original artificial vessel and felt no need to expand their power from there. If they had felt any dissatisfaction or longing because they did not have enough of a specific material or could not complete the design, that may have given them the drive they needed to invade others. But that would have entirely eliminated the image of the Meinokawa Shrine as the protectors of that idyllic rural village.

Kyousuke's Cruiser

I had already decided that Aika was living in the stereotypical rich person's apartment, so where was the super cool and strongest protagonist supposed to live? After a lot of thought, I finally arrived at a cruiser as the answer. Since it isn't fixed to one location, it helped establish his position as the rabbit that immediately parts ways with the heroines. Note that Aika lives on the top floor of a high-rise apartment while Kyousuke floats in the ocean at the bottommost level of the city.

The idea of living in a large vehicle must really tug at my heartstrings because besides the cruiser, this series has also had a mobile fortress, an

excursion ship, and a cruise ship. And if you look at my other series, you find an RV made from a large bus, a flying wing that constantly moves all around the world to keep its whereabouts unknown, maintenance bases made from more than 100 large special vehicles, nuke-resistant Objects, and more.
…And cruise ships in particular have appeared in Index, Object, Intellectual Village, Vampire Zombie, Boo Boo, Magisterus, and Blood-Sign, so they show up an awful lot, don't they?

About the Shiroyama Name

Shiroyama was a fake name Doctor S took, but not even he knows why he chose it. Since this was about the White Queen who can distort history, I decided to start the series without having an answer and leaving that blank. That way I could see what answer naturally came about *after the fact* as the story progressed as an experiment in growth (or maybe in altering history?). In the end, I discovered that the consonants of Shiroyama (srym)[2] are not found anywhere in the letters for the White Queen's name (iu – nu – fb – a – wuh – ei – kx – eu – pl – vjz). So as the story progressed, I gave it the meaning of that which the Queen lacks or that can complement her. But they are not complete strangers, so if you spell Shiroyama with a "shi" at the start instead of a "si", you get one letter in common. A young boy and girl brought together by H!?[3] You really can't underestimate coincidence, can you? Or is this the White Queen's guidance?

Translator's Notes and References

1. ↑ When one of the names uses kanji with furigana ruby text, I will write the furigana name first (since that is what I used in the story) with the kanji meaning in parentheses.
2. ↑ Using different Japanese romanization systems, the name can be written as Shiroyama or Siroyama.
3. ↑ The letter H can refer to sex in Japanese.

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